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"You've got to start messy": an exploration of the process of involvement in a large scale educational collaboration

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Abstract

There is increased pressure on Higher Education (HE) institutions from Government to collaborate, which is reflected in funding calls where collaborative bids are often favoured. Academic collaborations at the institutional level have built on research partnerships between individual academics.

Although collaborations between HEIs are increasing, it is an under researched area. The focus of research has mainly been on smaller scale collaborations at the level of individual academics or between professions. However, the process of collaboration between institutions needs more attention.

This qualitative study addresses the gap in existing research in social psychology and organisational theory by exploring the experience of involvement and the lifecycle of collaboration in a large scale HE-NHS collaboration. The study setting was CETL4HealthNE, a five year HEFCE funded collaboration. The study utilised semi-structured interviews (n=14) with members of the collaboration and longitudinal documentary analysis (n=46, length=5 years). The two main areas of interest were individual experience of involvement and the development of the collaboration.

Participants perceived their involvement as a balancing act, involvement in the collaboration was hard work but very rewarding. Relationships with others were central as participants believed the networking formed foundations for future partnerships. Deepening trust at an individual level translated into improved partnership at an organisational level. The lifecycle of the collaboration had three distinct phases: formation, mobilisation and revision.

This study portrays collaborations as socially constructed entities where relationships and the context play a vital part. The lifecycle of an individual collaboration is part of a larger cycle of collaborations, traces of the past are carried into the future through personal connections. With the increase of HE collaborations and the proposed organisational changes to the NHS, the study highlights the need to find ways to utilise the connections of previous working partnerships to enable new collaborations to benefit from them.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Overview

This thesis explores the process of collaboration and how those involved in the collaboration perceive their experience. Over the following chapters the aim is to build a picture of what it was like to be part of the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning for Health North East, CETL4HealthNE (referred in this thesis as CETL), a collaboration funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). There will also be parallels drawn between CETL and the existing literature about collaborative working. The focus will be on everyday experiences in a large collaboration rather than creating a formula or model of organisational behaviour. Through this thesis I aim to provide a glimpse of what involvement in the CETL was like for the individuals who were part of it. The emphasis of this thesis is on the inner working of collaboration as perceived by the participants. The focus is on the lived experience of collaboration; the messy, undefined process of being involved in collaboration. CETL provided a setting to explore the experience of involvement as the collaboration itself developed and grew.

The aim of this introductory chapter is to give some background for the study. The chapter is divided into two halves; the first part focuses on collaborations, the growing trend for collaborations and the importance of exploring the experience of involvement in a collaborative project. The second half gives a brief synopsis of each chapter to prepare the reader for the journey ahead. As part of the journey it is important to understand the key abbreviations used throughout this thesis. Table 1 presents eight key terms and their corresponding abbreviations.

Glossary of main terms	
Abbreviation	**The full term**
CETL	CETL4HealthNE
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institute
NHS	National Health Service
SHA	Strategic Health Authority
OMG	Operational Management Group
AMG	Advisory Management Group

Table 1 Presenting the main abbreviations used in the thesis

Setting the scene

The question which underlies the entirety of the project is: what is the experience of involvement in a large collaboration like? A definition of collaboration used in this study, which is based on previous research (D'Amour *et al.*, 2005; Selsky and Parker, 2005; Walsh and Kahn, 2010), is that collaboration is a relational partnership between two or more parties, either individuals or organisations, working jointly to address a common issue (see Table 2 p.16). Collaboration is a mutual relationship, it is not based on hierarchical power, financial purchasing or contractual agreements (Hardy *et al.*, 2005). Collaboration is about individuals or groups coming together to address an issue that is important to those involved but one that they would not be able to resolve so well on their own.

Organisations, in one form or another, have been studied for centuries. Discovering more efficient, more cost saving methods of running organisations has been the drive behind much of the organisational literature since the industrial revolution (Crowther and Green, 2004). The drive for efficiency is especially strong in manufacturing organisations where the emphasis is on quality control, reducing waste in production thus keeping the cost of products as low as possible. Furthermore the focus of organisational research, particularly in the private sector, is on the leaders with the underlying assumptions that leaders' interests represent the interests of those they lead (van Knippenberg, 2011). In inter-organisational collaborations, be it industry or education, those who ultimately make the decisions about the organisation joining a collaboration are rarely the same people who will actually be the collaborators.

In collaboration, the relationship has to be beneficial and profitable for all the partners involved. However, with collaborations in Higher Education (HE) settings, the productiveness and benefits, such as knowledge transfer, are not easily measured in monetary terms yet they are valid outcomes and incentives for further collaboration. Historically collaborations in HE have been research collaborations between scholars (Abramo *et al.*, 2009). Often the benefits have been measured in terms of prestige and reputation, at least within the limited circle of the discipline, and advancing the knowledge in that field. Finance and money have little to do with this type of collaboration traditionally. There is a

conundrum facing higher education. Universities are seen to be central to the standards of knowledge and progress in society both at the level of the individual and the society (Jongbloed *et al.*, 2008). Yet, they are increasingly being faced with financial pressures as degree courses are being cut based on their high running costs (University and College Union, 2012).

In the light of the financial challenges facing HE, collaboration is seen as one way of easing these pressures. Joining together with other universities in order to use the joint power for such things as purchasing or delivery of education. Furthermore, research collaborations, preferably with colleagues from other institutes or even better, from abroad, are increasingly seen as a source of income through research grants (Defazio *et al.*, 2009). In Higher Education there has been an increase of collaborations with for-profit organisations, especially within disciplines that have potential for creating innovative capital which in turn can be used for financial profit (HM Treasury, 2003).

The increased need for universities to work together at an organisational level has many converging drivers behind it. The Bologna declaration (European Commission, 1999) expressed a desire for creating a European Area of Higher Education enhancing mobility and employability of citizens as well as increasing the competitiveness of universities internationally through creating a common space for higher education institutions whilst retaining organisational independence. To create this, increased dialogue of the policy context needs to take place at all levels and across borders (Witte *et al.*, 2008). Furthermore, at the level of national government, the preferred approach is partnerships and collaborations between different organisations across the sectors (Roper *et al.*, 2005). The political and the financial climate are behind the increasing pressure for more joined up working across the higher education sector, both nationally and internationally.

These drivers have led to a changing landscape of collaboration within the HE sector. The traditional collaborations of scholars working together will continue, especially as collaboration is seen as an essential part of future research in many areas such as breast cancer (Loi *et al.*, 2004) and biochemistry (Warr and Kleywegt, 2010). This type of collaboration forms the foundations of what higher education is and represents. Beyond this, there

needs to be recognition about the emerging type of collaborations at organisational level in the HE arena. Combined with this, there is a strong sense of the unsustainability of the higher education sector in the UK as it currently is and the need for it to adapt in order to face the challenges presented to it (Universities UK, 2008). There does not seem to be an easy solution for reshaping and taking the sector forward into the next few decades. Rather than restricting themselves to scholarly collaboration, organisations are increasingly coming together to collaborate in order to shape and deliver education. Blass *et al.* (2010) created five different scenarios forecasting the future of Higher Education in the UK in 2035 based on a broad literature review. In each of these scenarios, collaborations had a meaningful and often central role in ensuring the survival of the sector. In the face of the challenges, collaborations are increasingly seen as a way for organisations to reach something they could not do alone.

Knowing the true value of collaborations in an educational setting is difficult, if not impossible. Business collaborations will result ideally in increased profit. If not, the companies involved would not invest the time, effort and manpower in them. In education, especially in a collaboration which has the aim of improving teaching and learning, measuring the success of a collaboration is not so straight forward. The aims of a commercial collaboration are innovation, inventions and financial gain. Collaboration, with the main focus on teaching and learning, has the potential for innovation. Yet seeing the full impact of this type of innovation may take time. The success is not measured in the number of created products or patents but rather by the improvement the teaching makes in the skills, attitudes and behaviour of the students. This may not be evident until the start of their working life after graduation.

In the health care sector, the agenda is about educating health professionals for the modernised health care who place patients at the centre of the care they offer (Roche, 2004; Caldwell *et al.*, 2006). Collaborations aim to advance the process of educating students so that they are better prepared for the needs of the changing practice setting. However, measuring the true impact of the outcomes of collaborations like these, is not as straightforward as counting the profits made from a new product that was created as a result of a technological collaboration. Measuring the outcomes would require following the

student throughout their career and seeing the potential benefits for the patients, yet even then, it would be a combination of factors that influences the way they work, pinning it down on a single intervention by the collaboration would be challenging (Schuwirth and Cantillon, 2005). Hence it has been suggested that single large scale studies will be unable to offer definite answers on what are the most successful parts of an educational programme (Norman, 2003).

To examine the impact of collaboration in an educational setting, especially in health care, requires the emphasis to be on the process of collaboration rather than the outcome. The aim, such as educating health care staff who are adaptable to the coming changes, should not be forgotten, however measuring the real value of this outcome is nearly impossible without a complete programme of research (Norman, 2003; Regehr, 2004). It is possible to educate students who feel that they are prepared for the challenge at the end of their degree, who after being in practice for two years are able to say that the intervention they took part in enables them to undertake their role competently. How true this reflection is long term is difficult to say. Within the timeframe of most research projects and evaluations, the moment they are able to capture is comparable to the moment when a water droplet hits the ocean miles out in the sea, not the ripples it causes and the impact it has when it has gathered strength and power and finally reaches the shoreline.

In essence, collaborations are about people coming together, both as a representative of their organisations and as individuals. However, much of the research has focused on examining the antecedents and outcomes – yet there is so much of collaboration that is defined in terms of the process of relationships and connections that are made (Kezar, 2005). On the whole, the main aim of educational collaborations will not be about financial productivity, rather it is likely to be about coming together to deliver better education. Institutions should remember their main goal, at the end of the day, is to deliver better education for the students (Jones, 2002; Taousanidis, 2002). There is also a political drive, to prefer funding collaborations, encouraging institutions to seek working partnerships with each other and improve their chances for gaining funding (Roper *et al.*, 2005). The impetus is on the side of increasing the numbers of collaborations taking place in the HE sector.

Exploring and understanding the process of involvement in collaborative settings in HE is imperative. The pressures and drivers that are prevalent in commercially influenced collaborations are sure to play a part, yet, there is a need to adjust the models from organisational studies to fit the higher education sector and its different demands especially as higher education institutions are often ill prepared for collaboration (Kezar, 2005). If looking at the level of the highest common denominator, all universities are focused on sharing and discovering knowledge, be it either teaching or research. Yet such a widely shared mission does not easily translate into a practical working partnership. Exploring how the collaboration grows and develops and how different individuals adjust to this process can shed light on the process of collaboration in higher education. Each institution has their own ways of working, their own cultures; no two universities are the same (Martin-Rodriguez *et al.*, 2005). Exploring the process of collaboration from the viewpoint of an individual will help to build future collaborations and prepare those who will be involved in them. Collaborations are not created; they are born out of interaction and discussions between those who are involved. In the organisational literature there has been a shift from modern to postmodern organisational theories. This shift heightens the importance of studying collaborations as relational entities through examining the process of how they develop, grow and die. There is a need for more narrative in not only the studies on collaboration in HE but in the wider field of organisational studies (Crowther and Green, 2004).

There is a distinct difference between the domain and the ethos under which universities and commercial companies operate as highlighted in *the Lambert Review of Business-University Collaboration* (HM Treasury, 2003), even though there is an increasing pressure for universities to adopt a commercial mind set. Collaborations in education should not be measured vigilantly against the measure of commercial collaborations. There is a clear expectation of financial benefits from business university collaborations from the government (HM Treasury, 2003). Yet, generating financial benefits from a purely educational collaboration is much harder. The mission of universities is far wider than financial gain, as mentioned earlier, they are seen as the standard of knowledge in society (Jongbloed *et al.*, 2008), therefore the true success of their operations should be measured in light of the wider impact they

have. Collaborations in higher education should be valued for the immeasurable qualities they can offer to those involved and the wider community around them.

When examining a collaboration, the focus should be about discovering what the experience of being involved in a collaboration is like (Lingard *et al.*, 2004). How are people attracted to collaboration? What are the motivators and what are the discouragers of involvement? How do the individuals perceive the collaboration to develop? How do the members themselves perceive the collaboration? What defines the experience of involvement in an educational collaboration? There are many questions that need to be answered. There are hints of answers offered in the existing organisational literature but there is also a need for more research to build a picture of collaborations in HE setting. Collaborations in educational settings are an emerging phenomenon which differs fundamentally from commercial collaborations in the foundations of their ideology and what they are aiming to achieve. The way in which success is measured in educational collaborations in comparison to a commercial collaboration is poles apart. There may well be similarities but in the light of an increased push and desire for collaborations in educational settings the narrative of what involvement in an educational collaboration entails should be explored further.

The aim of this study is to explore the experience of involvement in an educational collaboration. The emphasis is on the process of the collaboration in its entirety, to create a much needed narrative on what an educational collaboration is as an experience. The study aims to explore how the members themselves perceive the collaboration through capturing both the context in which the collaboration takes place as well as the individual experience of the involvement. The proposed changes to the NHS, such as GP led commissioning through clinical commissioning groups and increased interface between the private sector at a local and national level, suggest an increasing need of collaboration between the different levels of service provision (Department of Health, 2010), therefore the need to examine the experience and process of collaboration between HE and NHS is imperative.

The study setting

This study took place in one of the Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) called CETL4HealthNE (CETL). A more detailed description of the collaboration will be given in chapter four that provides the outline and history of the CETL. The collaboration was a consortium of nine partner organisations from both the HE sector and the NHS in the North East of England. The aim was to bring change into the curriculum in order to educate health care professionals who would be prepared for the changes that a modernised health care service brought with it. There were approximately 120 members who were regularly involved in activities through one of six workgroups.

Context

The origins of CETL, and all the other Centres of Excellence in Teaching and Learning, were in the 2003 White Paper *The Future of Higher Education* (DfES, 2003). In the White Paper, the government announced their desire for the creation for centres of excellence which would focus on teaching and learning. This was followed by HEFCE's consultation document (HEFCE, 2003) in July 2003 inviting higher education institutes to input and feedback on their proposal for the centres of excellence. As an organisation HEFCE (2010) is responsible for distributing public money to improve and promote high quality teaching and research in HEIs across England. During this initial phase, encouraging collaboration and sharing best practice cross sector, in order to improve teaching, was one of the five objectives set out by HEFCE. The emphasis and aim of the Centres of Excellence were raising the esteem placed on teaching in higher education. The traditional route of recognising and rewarding excellence is very much associated with research not teaching as highlighted in a recent research that found promotion to be linked more often with excellence in research than excellence in teaching (HEA, 2009). The focus on teaching in the Centres of Excellence reflects the White Paper (The Department for Education and Skills, 2003) where the importance of teaching is highlighted clearly through the changing criteria for being able to award degrees with the emphasis being on teaching as "it will no longer be necessary to have research degree awarding powers to become a university" (p. 47).

HEFCE set out a call for proposals in January 2004 for universities and colleges across England to bid for funding to set up Centres of Excellence in Teaching and Learning (HEFCE, 2004). The intention was first mentioned in the HE White Paper in 2003. The focus of the centres was to reward teachers as well as enhancing students' learning experience. The plan to fund both single institution and collaborative centres was announced. A year later HEFCE announced the successful applicants (HEFCE, 2005). A total of 74 Centres of Excellence were funded, out of which 19 were collaborative Centres of Excellence, one of which was CETL4HealthNE. The range of disciplines and locations was varied but the unifying factor across them was the emphasis on the importance of teaching and learning in higher education for both staff and students. The HEFCE funding was for five years from 2005/2006 to 2009/2010 and included both funding for capital spend and for the annual running costs.

Overview of the thesis

The thesis consists of a total of nine chapters. A brief summary of each will be provided below.

Chapter 2 Literature review

The literature review aims to build a picture of previous research on collaboration. The first part of the literature review will focus on the definition of collaboration as well as presenting a scene of the changing climate for collaborations in HE. Next, the emphasis will be on the theoretical aspect of collaboration. Traditional organisational theories will be touched upon before examining social constructionism's role in organisational theory. Then collaborations specifically in HE will be examined. The focus will be on business-HE collaborations, interprofessional education and the increase of collaborations in HE and finally on HE-NHS collaboration. How collaborations work and what encourages or hinders collaboration is examined before the final section focusing on the organisational and individual dynamics in collaborative settings.

Chapter 3 Methods and methodology

In the methods and methodology chapter the theoretical framework behind the study is explained. The importance of a theoretical framework for research is discussed as well as the role of different paradigms adopted by researchers. The role of the researcher in bringing integrity into their research is touched upon. Social constructionism is introduced in more details as the epistemology guiding this study. A critique that has been directed towards social constructionism will be viewed and in the light of criticism, a distinction between weak and strong constructionism is drawn. The closing part of the methodology section of the chapter touches on some overarching points on analysis and then narrows it further to documentary analysis.

The methods will give a detailed outline of the process of the research project. The changes that took place in the course of the research project are highlighted in the original and updated proposals which are followed by the research questions. After defining the aims and objectives, the focus shifts from the why and what, to how. Interviews and documentary analysis were used as sources for this qualitative study; to help to clarify the process of conducting the research they are presented separately. For the interviews, the sample population is presented, recruitment of participants is explained and the qualitative analysis is described. Likewise for the documentary analysis, the possible sources are presented and then the selection and analysis is described. In essence, the study is a qualitative project employing both interviews and meeting minutes as its data sources for constructing a picture of the experience of involvement in collaboration.

Chapter 4 The history and development of CETL

The aim of this chapter is to give the reader a brief account of the history of the CETL and highlight some major events in the timeline of CETL. Its role is to act as a reference point to the following chapters, giving the background to the setting of the study rather than be a separate chapter in its own right. The process from the call for proposals to the establishment of CETL is described. The timelines link CETL with national and regional policy developments and changes that took place between 2005 and 2010 as well as giving reference points to the development of CETL.

Chapter 5 Participant experience – Small piece in a big puzzle

This chapter focuses on the experiences of the individual amongst the totality of the collaboration. The individual's experience is examined through how they became involved in the collaboration, what the pressure points and encouragers for their involvement were and on the interface between their home organisation and the collaboration. As the experience of involvement is a central theme that is explored in this study, much of the chapter focuses on the participants' reflections on their involvement. The chapter will examine the pressure points participants perceived in their involvement as well as the factors which encouraged their involvement. The concept of seeing participation as a balancing act is introduced. The impact colleagues, in their home organisations, had on participants' involvement is also examined.

Chapter 6 Context of the collaboration

CETL was a complex organisation and the aim of this chapter is to focus on the organisational factors that affected how the participants perceived their involvement both across the collaboration and on the level of individual organisations. The complexity of the collaboration as participants perceived it is examined. Then the organisational differences perceived by the participants, such as HE-NHS, are presented. Organisational dynamics are further explored through the tension of competition and collaboration that some participants felt. Next the role the workgroups had on participants' experiences of the collaboration are examined through looking at how the participant became involved, as well as the size and the focus of the group. The last section of the chapter focuses on the outcomes participants perceived the collaboration to have. The outcomes participants had witnessed or expected to witness in the course of the collaboration formed a part of the context of the collaboration which impacted their experience.

Chapter 7 Collaboration through meeting minutes

In this chapter the aim is to portray the collaboration as it is perceived from the meeting minutes of the operational management group (OMG). The chapter is focused around three different areas, the day to day running, the context and the makeup of collaboration. The OMG had a very handson role in

getting the collaboration up and running; moving the collaboration from the description on paper for the HEFCE bid into a functioning entity. The chapter will focus on issues around the day to day running of the collaboration such as communications strategy and methods, practical and organisational issues and the projects that took place. The structure of the collaboration will be touched upon briefly as well as the development of an identity and focus of the collaboration. The development of workgroups as perceived through the OMG will also be considered. Through the different aspects of the life of the collaboration listed here, the chapter aims to depict a sketch of the CETL as it is presented in the meeting minutes. The meeting minutes are not a word for word record of what took place in the meetings however, it is possible to explore the makeup and process of the collaboration through the minutes which span the five funded years existence of CETL.

Chapter 8 Lifecycle of the collaboration

The final findings chapter focuses on the lifecycle of collaboration. There were three identifiable stages of evolution in the life of the CETL; the formation, mobilisation and the revision which will each be viewed in turn. When examining the formation phase the emphasis is on the way the collaboration emerged from undefined to defined entity. In the next phase, mobilisation, the chapter will focus on how ideas expressed earlier are turned into action. The final phase in the lifecycle of CETL was revision and the areas which were important in the revision phase are discussed. The chapter will finish by examining the evolutionary cycle of collaborations. The proposed idea is that as an individual collaboration goes through a process of growing and developing as a collaboration, there is also a wider on-going cycle of evolution that is taking place through the connections and relationships that have been formed. The chapter finishes with the suggestion that although the value of collaboration is not easily measured, the future potential of the relationships that were created through the collaboration are a major benefit of any collaboration.

Chapter 9 Discussion

The discussion chapter will draw together ideas presented in the preceding chapters. The three main areas that will be discussed are the idea of

involvement as a balancing act, the central role of relationships and the on-going nature of collaborations. The first part of the discussion will focus on the balancing act participants experience as part of their involvement. The negative and positive sides of the scales are examined as well as looking at the context of the balancing act. The next section centres on the importance of relationships in a collaboration as well as the different levels in which these take place. The third section discusses the on-going nature of collaboration. The lifecycle of collaboration through the different stages is discussed before focusing more widely on the on-going evolution of collaborations where hints of previous collaborations are carried forwards to future collaborations through the connections and relationships that have been built. The chapter will close by scrutinising some of the potential shortfalls of this study as well as presenting suggestions for future research.

Closing remark

There is an emerging trend of collaborations between HEIs outside the traditional setting of scholarly partnerships. This study aims to build a picture of what the experience of involvement in a large scale educational collaboration was like for the participants as well as map out some of the processes of a developing collaboration. The desire behind this study is to construct a sketch of what the involvement was like for the participants. And by doing so contribute to an evidence base of the process of collaboration; going beyond the focus of what makes an efficient collaboration to start thinking about the process of involvement of individuals. This is much wider and has longer lasting impacts than just the duration of the collaboration itself. The emphasis is on the relational side of the collaboration as relationships can be seen as seeds for future partnerships. In the HE sector especially, the potential created by these relationships is one of the major benefits of collaboration.

Chapter 2. Literature review

Introduction

This literature review aims to produce an overview of research on collaboration. As the topic of the study is very practical in its application and the field of study wide-ranging, the intended focus is on the more practical aspects of collaboration. The chapter starts with introducing and defining collaboration as a concept. Then the focus is on giving an overview of collaborations in HE settings and exploring the question what makes collaborations function effectively? Next, the literature review will examine the dynamics between individuals and organisations in collaborations. The final part of this chapter will focus on the theoretical aspects of collaboration by briefly looking at organisational theory and collaboration and expanding on social constructionism as an approach of organisational theory before concluding with directions for future research.

Process of the literature review

The main method for finding material for the literature review was using academic databases including Web of Knowledge, Scopus, ERIC and Medline. The main database used was Web of Knowledge. The terms used for the search were collaboration, consortium, partnership, education, health, NHS, National Health Service, HE, higher education, social constructionism and organisational theory. Collaboration was the main term searched for and therefore, it was included either as a title word or key word in each search. In order to narrow the number of results down, it was combined with the other terms either using a single word or if that resulted in too many hits then narrowing the selection by including the word also as a title word or a key word.

It is possible that this method may have given unfair preference to journal articles which have very literal titles. However, by including the term as a keyword or topic broadened the number of potential target articles. Further, checking through the references of each relevant article ensured that the wider scope of available literature was accessed. Also examining the reference maps on Web of Knowledge for the key articles, highlighted references that were missed by using the specific terms in the search engine. The reference maps that go either back or forwards two generations helped to find many references

from books that are significant but easily missed when using the database search engines which favour journal articles.

The abstracts for all the studies found in the search were read. Based on the abstracts the relevant studies were selected and the whole article was read. After reading each relevant study a decision was made whether to include or exclude it from the literature review. The quality of the studies was judged based on the journal they were published in, the reliability of the methodology and methods used and the depth in which they were explained. If the decision was not clear, based on the other factors, the final criteria used was how widely the article or book was referenced across the literature. The focus of the literature review was on experimental studies. However, opinion pieces were included if they had a contribution to the study that no experimental study offered and the argument was supported and referenced well. The majority of the studies on collaboration were experimental studies whereas there were more opinion pieces amongst the social constructionism literature.

Setting the scene

What is collaboration – definition and benefits

On the face of it, collaboration appears to be a straight forward concept, yet there is an aura of intangibility about it. Katz and Martin (1997) point out that there are aspects of collaboration that cannot be quantified. Both the tangible and the intangible are part of collaboration. Terms such as complex, voluntary and dynamic are used to describe the process of collaboration which is seen both as an action to address an issue and a team experience involving individuals from differing backgrounds (D'Amour *et al.*, 2005). The advantage of collaborative relationships is seen to be that the partners retain their organisational autonomy whilst being able to join forces in addressing a common issue (Selsky and Parker, 2005). The interdependent working of organisations or stakeholders in addressing issues that are beyond their power to tackle is characteristic of collaborations (Keyton *et al.*, 2008). Collaborations exist because of mutual agreement not by depending on financial or hierarchical powers (Hardy *et al.*, 2005). Essentially, the relationship is created, not purchased. In the simplest form, collaboration could be seen as two or more partners coming together to work towards a common goal (Walsh and Kahn, 2010). Based on the definitions and characteristics above, a working definition

of a collaboration which was used in this study was developed. This definition is presented below in Table 2. The important aspects of the definition are that collaboration is firstly a relational entity and secondly it has been created for a purpose.

Collaboration is a relational partnership between two or more parties, either individuals or organisations, working jointly to address a common issue

Table 2 The definition of collaboration used in this study

For collaboration to take place, there usually is a shared need that initiates the joint action. The main aim of a collaboration is to address an issue, yet there are benefits that go beyond the reason that brought the partners together. There are indirect benefits that can improve partners' performance in a completely unrelated area to the focus of the collaboration (Selden *et al.*, 2006). Collaborations are seen as a useful way of sharing new ideas (Stein and Short, 2001). It gives the participants an opportunity to engage with a wider professional community outside their usual environment (Selden *et al.*, 2006). Collaborations between practice and education can result in meaningful knowledge transfer between the partners if front line staff and individuals who are skilled at translating knowledge are involved (Jansson *et al.*, 2010). Participants in collaborations in HE settings place high value on the relationships and networking that are created (Kezar, 2005). Collaborators also benefit from a wider range of skills that are available through the partnership (Tett *et al.*, 2001). In Table 3 below, some of the benefits of being involved in a collaboration are listed.

The benefit	Setting of the study	Source
Sharing new ideas	Collaboration on degree programmes in HE	Stein and Short 2001
Access to wider professional community	Comparative study of 20 collaborations in early education and care settings	Selden 2006
Knowledge transfer	Longitudinal research collaboration with non-profit providers of health and social care	Jansson et al. 2010
New relationships and networking	Case study of four HEIs with strong collaborative practices	Kezar 2005
Wider range of skills available	Collaboration between schools and community partners addressing social exclusion	Tett et al. 2001

Table 3 Key benefits of participating in a collaboration

Teamwork, partnership, collaboration – all the same thing?

There is a multitude of terms and phrases that are linked to collaboration such as interagency working, multi-agency working, partnership, consortium, joint working, co-operation, working together and teamwork, to name a few. To further the conundrum of differing terms, there is a lack of a unified field of study as scholars are divided between those who study work and those who study organisations (Haveman and Khaire, 2006). This multitude of interchangeable terms in use, led to Glatter (2003) defining them as slippery. Yet, even if the terminology is not clear, the importance of people working together is not diminished. Small groups, or teams, are seen as the foundations of organisations (Gersick, 1988) and most communication within organisations takes place on team level (Keyton *et al.*, 2008). D'Amour *et al.* (2005) examined the definitions and concepts linked to collaboration in literature and found that partnership is one of the elements often used to define collaboration, likewise teams were seen as an essential part of collaborative working. There are scholars devoted to distinguishing the differences between types of partnership working or collaboration, such as Harman (2000) who examined organisational mergers in the HE sector in Australia over four decades to propose a continuum from voluntary co-operation to becoming unitary structure. For the purposes of this study, it is sufficient to be aware of the existence of these terms and that they are, at times, used interchangedly.

Changing climate – more collaboration nationally & internationally

This study focuses on collaboration in HE and the NHS. The agenda for collaboration has been growing steadily in the NHS for a while. Working in a multi-professional, and often multi-organisational team, with overarching goals and objectives is part of health care professionals' everyday working environment. A starting point for this could be seen in the 1970's when the government announced their plan for reorganising the NHS by placing all the care in regional and area health authorities (The Cabinet, 1972). Furthermore, the 1975 White Paper, *Better Services for the Mentally Ill* (Department of Health and Social Security) laid out plans for interagency working between NHS, local authorities and voluntary organisations to improve care in the mental health sector. Terms such as interagency working and integrated teams have since

become part of everyday vocabulary. Part of the New Labour agenda when they came to power in 1997, was to replace competition associated with internal markets with integrated care as proposed in the White Paper '*The new NHS: modern, dependable*' (Department of Health, 1997). Once again, the NHS is in the midst of reorganisation which will require new levels of joint working between the different parts of the service. The vision for this restructuring was laid out by the Coalition government in *'Equity and excellence: Liberating the NHS'* (Department of Health, 2010). The terms have changed over the years but the topic remains the same, the need for co-working and collaboration between organisations and individuals.

Increasingly, this complexity is reaching into the training of the health care workforce with more collaboration required between institutions and employers as well as between different degree programmes. Across public sector institutions, there is a push for a more collaborative and integrated approach to the service provision. Partnership working had a central role in the New Labour modernisation agenda for providing 'best value' from public services (Roper *et al.*, 2005). In the challenging financial climate, with no sign of change for the better on the horizon, collaboration is seen as a way for the partners to share costs. Collaboration gives the organisations access to each other's resources (Wu and Pangarkar, 2010). Government policies can be seen to actively encourage collaboration between academic institutions (Clark, 2010). This trend is seen in health care as well as social work and higher education settings in the UK (Parker, 1992; Sloper, 2004). Moreover it is reflected internationally, in Europe and further afield (U.S. General Accounting Office, 2002; Laine, 2004; Kezar, 2005). The preference for collaboration is also evident when looking at research funding where collaborations are actively encouraged (Walsh and Kahn, 2010). Even in developing countries funding is seen as a driver in increasing research collaboration (Ubfal and Maffioli, 2011). Furthermore, at the level of local government partnership, across the different areas of provision, is a favoured model (Roper *et al.*, 2005) and collaboration is seen as the way to improve interagency working (Sloper, 2004).

Higher education is perceived as an inseparable part of progress for individuals and societies (Jongbloed *et al.*, 2008). Higher Education Institutions in England are facing challenges due to the rapid changes in the historical framework in which the institutions are used to operating; a trend which has

also been noted in other European countries (Taousanidis, 2002). In today's society networking is a central feature, the need for universities to be more accountable and engage with their stakeholders and institutions related to them is increased (Jongbloed *et al.*, 2008). Higher student numbers, increased student mobility, raised financial costs and changing political climate are amongst the challenges the universities face (Universities UK, 2008). This pressure has increased both the collaboration and competition in organisations causing the boundaries between different sectors to become hazy (Flora and Hirt, 2010). However, increasingly institutions are choosing to collaborate instead of compete with each other (Osborne, 2006) in order to adapt to the changing drivers and culture.

Collaboration in HE

When comparing models depicting the different stages of collaboration Kezar (2005) noted that building commitment was a phase that was particularly valued in higher education but was not captured by the models created by researchers in the organisational tradition. Traditionally collaboration in higher education has been shared research projects with or without the aid of small grants or partnerships like The Cochrane Collaboration (2012) in health care or The Campbell Collaboration (2012) in social intervention within different disciplines where academics are working together to improve the evidence base, without receiving monetary benefit from it. In order for these types of collaborations to be successful it is vital that the members are committed to them and can be certain of other members' commitment as well.

Collaborating with businesses

In the light of increasing globalisation of education, many universities need to be more outwardly focused by seeking partners in settings not traditionally associated with higher education. An example of such an alliance would be a partnership with telecommunications companies or computer manufacturers to develop virtual learning environment (Taousanidis, 2002). Collaborations with partners from outside the educational setting can be beneficial for both parties, if managed well (Slotte and Tynjälä, 2003). Universities' collaborations with external partners can enable higher education institutes to form research collaborations with companies and thus create and spread new knowledge (Laine, 2004). Even though collaborations are seen as

an alternative for competition and commercialisation in post-compulsory education, the main focus in all of the organisations needs to be delivering quality education to students and being transparent and accessible to the entrants in the process(Jones, 2002; Taousanidis, 2002).

For university-industry collaboration to be successful there needs to be a commitment on both sides to overcome the barriers for collaboration such as cultural differences, lack of common language, and mistrust (Matlay, 2000). One of the main challenges for industry-university collaboration is the differences in interests and focus between partners; for industries the main value for the collaboration is increasing knowledge that can be used for innovation and product design whereas universities' central areas of interest are teaching and learning (Slotte and Tynjälä, 2003).

Increase of interprofessional education

As mentioned earlier, the shift in health care, both education and practice, has been towards increased interdisciplinary working. The aim is to create a more continuous journey for the patient through the care process. Therefore, when planning curriculum, it is essential to consider the needs of the patients as well as those of the student and the organisation (Munro and Russell, 2007). The idea of joined up working in the practice setting needs to be reflected in the educational sector. However, there is a lack of a connected strategy across the nation and regionally not helped by the lack of structure to bring together those involved to review progress (Barr *et al.*, 2011). Without collaboration across disciplines at an educational level, it is challenging to deliver joined up care optimally in practice. Increasingly courses are delivered in an interdisciplinary setting to highlight the importance of working together with other health care professions and erase faulty stereotypes that might hinder future service delivery (Hamilton, 2011). Interprofessional education offers both the staff and the students' greater understanding of the similarities and differences between the different degree programmes (Overman and Viens, 1997).

Collaborations do not always reach their full potential (Hardy *et al.*, 2005) or achieve all of their aims. For instance, Freeth (2001) described a successful and sustained collaboration in interprofessional education between a medical and a nursing school in creating a Clinical Skills Centre, yet regardless of the

positive impact the collaboration had on the institutions, the aim of delivering joint modules for nursing and medical students had not materialised. Contrasting example to this was a collaboration described by Overman and Viens (1997) where two different nursing degree programmes had shared an integrated curriculum enabling students to gain qualification in the other programme with the option of one year's additional study. The integrated curriculum enabled programmes to benefit from each other's strengths, offer a wider variety of experiences, increase cost effectiveness by sharing resources and ultimately led to greater understanding, for both the staff and students, on shared and unique characters of the courses (Overman and Viens, 1997). Studies on interprofessional collaboration give valuable insight into the area of collaboration in higher education. They can be seen as a very specific subtype of collaboration in the HE arena and offer a springboard for future collaborative studies.

Benefits of HE NHS collaboration

Bridging the gap by bringing practice and theory closer together is vital for both good health care education and good quality care in practice. Through collaboration, academics can gain increasing familiarity with practice arrangements and in turn practice partners have an opportunity to contribute towards change in education (Munro and Russell, 2007). It has been suggested that collaboration between academics and practitioners helps to solve potential problems before they appear as well as creating a positive learning environment for the students (Taylor, 2007). The communication between practice and academia has to be a two way stream according to Jansson *et al.* (2010), however as they note, often academic research has not reached the recipients in the practice community or even if it has, the audience has not been ready to receive it. In health care a linear view of knowledge transfer has been very prevalent and the concept of interaction in the process of gaining new knowledge is new (Huzzard *et al.*, 2010). Jansson et al (2010) discuss a concept of specialist knowledge brokers as part of the communication process between organisations, bridging the divide between practitioners and academics, which is often artificially formed, due to language differences and different knowledge required by each. Yet, the dichotomy of research and

practice is deeply rooted in the differentiation of funding at governmental level for research projects and practice initiatives (Trickett and Espino, 2004).

HE and the NHS are both a collection of complex and changing institutions making it difficult to plan joint action across the organisations (Urquhart *et al.*, 2007). Often for HEIs reorganisation is needed before they are in a position to collaborate, as many of them are very compartmentalised and lack a supportive atmosphere and structure towards collaboration (Kezar, 2006). On a practical level there are differences between HE and NHS organisations and there is a need to consider these carefully when designing joint activities. This was highlighted by Black and Bury (2004) when discussing the challenges faced in creating a multidisciplinary library and information service to serve both HE and NHS communities, examples of this were the limited opening times which were a barrier to NHS staff and finding enough quiet study spaces for students. A stakeholder review of sharing e-content between HE and NHS further highlighted the different needs and usage patterns of the organisations, that need to be considered when planning a collaborative partnership (Urquhart *et al.*, 2007).

How to make collaboration work?

To this point, the literature review has touched upon what collaboration is and examined the role of collaboration in HE and the NHS. The aim of this section is to examine factors that have been found to encourage collaborative working. The section will focus on areas such as ownership, communication and support to build a picture of what enables collaborative working.

Aims and ownership

The aims and the ownership have been found to play an influential role in the life of a collaboration. Hayward *et al.* (2000), who examining how educators can best work together to learn from each other in interprofessional settings, concluded that being explicit about the aims of the collaboration fosters commitment and reduces the chance of misunderstandings between partners. Furthermore, collaboration needs to have realistic aims, otherwise it is in danger of receiving a reputation for offering more than it can deliver (Wells, 2004). Having clear and explicit aims is not enough, the partners need to have equal interest and commitment to the shared goals of the collaboration (Bergman and Schooley, 2003). Leurs *et al.* (2008) examined the sustainability of

collaborations in public health promotion and concluded that good communication is vital as stakeholders from organisations operating in different areas have been found to have different interpretations of goals and aims of collaborations. Similarly, the importance of communication is reflected in the need to have clear roles and responsibilities for each partner to enable better collaboration (Sloper, 2004; Buse and Harmer, 2007) and lack of clear cut roles can cause misunderstandings and reduce participation (Wells, 2004).

In addition to clear expectations of the goals and intended outcomes of the collaboration, having a sense of ownership over the collaboration is found to facilitate partnerships (El Ansari and Phillips, 2001a; Munro and Russell, 2007). In practice, achieving the sense of ownership is often difficult as described by Slack (2004) through the example of involving the community in educational partnerships. Due to the nature of funding, community partners often become involved after the funding has been secured for the collaboration and some plans for it are already in place rather than from the beginning. Hence their role as equal partners from the beginning is arguable (Slack, 2004) and the ownership they have over the initiative is different than those involved from the beginning. Furthermore, the need for long term commitment and vision is a typical feature of collaborations in HE setting (Stein and Short, 2001).

Understanding each other

Good communication between partners with clear communication strategies is necessary for an effective collaboration (Sloper, 2004; Burke, 2006) as well as the need for a good working relationship with the stakeholders (Wells, 2004; Buse and Harmer, 2007). Wills and Ellison (2007) explored public health workers' views on partnership working and concluded that for a functioning collaboration the partners need to develop commitment and that the differences between partners need to be addressed. Organisational differences in culture and ways of operating can cause misunderstanding and hinder collaboration (Freeth, 2001). Better communication between partners leads to finding creative solutions that are vital in complex collaborative situations with multiple stakeholders and ever changing environments (Deetz, 2000).

Conversely, perceiving the scope and role of one's own organisation as fundamentally different from the others' can make the expectation of collaboration unrealistic if each believe themselves to have legitimate core

business to engage in that only they can address (Wills and Ellison, 2007). As a way of overcoming organisational differences Hibbert and Huxham (2010) suggest that identifying common traditions in the past of the organisations or the individuals may help to build foundations for a common future. Similarly, Sharma and Kearins (2010) recommend discussing and defining a shared meaning of the goals in the beginning of the collaboration as a way of creating understanding between partners.

After comparing collaboration in two very diverse settings, a voluntary network and an international company, Evans and Wolf (2005) concluded that trust was an essential factor in successful collaborations. Tett *et al.* (2001) examined a range of collaborations addressing social exclusion and found that a shared or complementary purpose, clarity of roles, trust between partners and similar ways of operating contributed towards an effective collaboration. In a study that appears to hold a classic status amongst the collaborative literature, Gray (1985) notes that a successful collaborative project requires focusing on the similarities between the partner organisations and the factors linking the stakeholders together for the collaboration rather than concentrating on individual partners' areas of excellence.

Reciprocity and support

In collaborations, individuals' experience of involvement is affected by their organisation's perception of the collaboration and the involvement of others in it. Reciprocity, defined as an individual's response to their partners' behaviour with an action on a similar scale, is often studied when looking at social interactions between individuals (Parks and Komorita, 1998). The likelihood of reciprocation is affected by individuals' status. Higher status individuals can view others' actions to reciprocate as gifts and not favours and therefore are less likely to return them (Druckman, 1998). This is reflected in Wells et al.'s (1998) findings in an interdisciplinary collaboration, in an acute care hospital setting, where perceived high involvement on part of the physician was related to greater collaboration by other partners than perceived low involvement by the physician. This suggests that when higher status individuals are engaged, it can increase the involvement of lower status individuals.

The role of organisational support is widely explored in social exchange research and perceived organisational support has been found to predict

individuals' commitment to the organisation and in turn to behaviour which benefits the organisation (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). In organisational behaviour, employees who perceive support from the organisation they work for, have a greater belief in reciprocating actions (Ladd and Henry, 2000). Having successful exchanges between partners strengthens the relationship and increases trust.

Learning from others and their mistakes

On the whole, collaborations are seen to be an effective and beneficial way of achieving what one organisation could not accomplish alone. However, lessons can be learnt from collaborations that did not reach their potential for the benefit of future collaborations. In recent years one such example is the National Health Service University, NHSU. The aim of the NHSU was to provide career development and learning opportunities to staff at all levels (Department of Health, 2007). Yet, it failed to deliver what it set out to do (Taylor *et al.*, 2010). Reasons for the failure of NHSU included not fully engaging stakeholders and unclear aims of the collaboration (Wells, 2004).

Buse and Harmer (2007) examined factors enabling highly effective global public-private health partnerships and concluded that collaborations could be improved by having a balanced stakeholder representation, concentrating on relevant needs, being clear about the roles of the partnership, being able to see the bigger picture and having adequate resources for what is aimed to achieve through the collaboration. Furthermore, based on their research on interprofessional collaboration in an intensive care unit setting, Lingard *et al.* (2004) argued that there needs to be more realism in reporting about collaborative experiences since the current perception of collaboration and team work is too idealised and the lived experience of collaboration differs from the way it is presented in research. Factors that were often reported by researchers as barriers to collaboration were in fact seen as the underlying rules for the daily interaction within the team by those involved (Lingard *et al.*, 2004).

Sustaining collaboration

Sustainability is often mentioned as an aim of collaborations and recommendations for achieving it are available in the literature. Connolly *et al.* (2007) examined a collaborative initiative to implement e-learning, and

concluded that for the collaboration to be sustainable, all the partners needed to perceive benefits from their participation. Research examining case studies of educational collaboration across borders in Europe, noted that once formal collaboration has finished, mutual interest can act as the continuing bond between the organisations aiding further collaboration and keeping the momentum going (Osborne, 2006). Also, at times, the collaboration can become beneficial to the partners beyond the original remit and becomes more of an on-going partnership rather than a one off collaboration (Bergman and Schooley, 2003). Ideally, collaboration should not depend on outside influences to sustain it, however, constructing a self-sufficient collaboration is challenging, especially if the collaboration had outside influence in its initiation (Butler *et al.*, 2004). Even during a structured and supported collaboration process, there is a trend of decline in the overall level of participation (Wells *et al.*, 1998). A collaboration terminated at the point of maturity, should not be viewed as a failure if it has achieved its original objective, left a legacy of the work undertaken and the possibility of future collaborations in related areas (Freeth, 2001).

In an evaluation of a Scottish collaboration delivering continued professional development to health care staff, it was noted that ongoing participation in collaboration needed to be beneficial for both the individual and the organisation they represent, involvement should open new avenues and opportunities for both (Munro and Russell, 2007). Furthermore, there needs to be a vision for the collaboration that goes beyond those who are involved (Huxham and Vangen, 2000). Similarly Jansson *et al.* (2010), who examined knowledge translation taking place between practice and academia, noted that it is vital that the long term vision of the collaboration goes beyond the individuals involved, so that staff changes will not affect its longevity. In a study examining a partnership in interprofessional education Freeth (2001) noted that collaboration needs to become mainstream activity, a necessity rather than an additional exercise for the partner organisations, to be sustained .

Organisational and individual dynamics

This section examines organisational and individual dynamics which play a part in collaborations. The aim of this section is to explore the role of the individual within the collaboration as well as the impact organisational settings

can have on the involvement. The areas of focus are success of collaboration, organisational differences, the individual in the collaboration, finding enthusiasts and intergroup dynamics. These have been chosen to highlight the complexity of factors affecting the experience of being part of collaboration.

Success of collaboration

The elements affecting the success of collaborative initiatives can be seen operating on multiple levels such as interpersonal, within organisation and between organisations (Martin-Rodriguez *et al.*, 2005). Furthermore, the political climate can also have an impact on the process as well as the success of the collaboration (Osborne, 2006); even to the degree of some collaborations being initiated and supported by a current political view. An example of this is the New Labour government's push to encourage Higher and Further Education to collaborate in order to widen participation in HE (Slack, 2004). On a personal level factors such as individual readiness, understanding and acceptance of one's own skills and roles play a part in success of a collaboration, whereas on an environmental level shared vision, communication, trust and respect are central (Henneman *et al.*, 1995). On an organisation level, the decision to collaborate is affected by economic, political and professional drivers (Munro and Russell, 2007). Desire to resolve inefficiencies and gaps in service delivery can encourage collaboration between professions (Freeth, 2001).

The unprosaic view of collaboration is based on ownership and trade of commodities, without this exchange, tensions can increase and collaboration can become lethargic; when the exchange of commodities is understood and appreciated it allows individuals to anticipate responses and maintains the collaboration (Lingard *et al.*, 2004). The exchange of commodities is a process where concrete (such as material resources) and abstract (such as respect) commodities are exchanged in the process of collaboration and the collaboration can be seen as an outcome of the ownership and trade of these commodities (Lingard *et al.*, 2004). However, even if collaboration is not reduced to such simple terms of exchange, understanding the underlying concepts of collaboration is important (D'Amour *et al.*, 2005).

Collaboration can be viewed as an interpersonal process that requires individuals' skills and knowledge to succeed. However, there needs to be an awareness that collaborations do not exist in a vacuum but are affected by

organisational cultures (Martin-Rodriguez *et al.*, 2005) as highlighted above. To enable the collaboration to reach its full potential, the institutions need to remain flexible within, whilst being open towards their partners (Taousanidis, 2002). The partners need to be able to commit themselves to the collaboration fully by investing time and effort into it and in turn being able to see the benefits from their participation (Matlay, 2000). Furthermore, it is vital to have commitment to the collaboration at all levels of the organisation to ensure wider participation and in doing so, not being dependent on just a few committed individuals for the success of the collaboration (Sloper, 2004). In order to create a collaborative culture in an organisation, the senior staff need to be perceived to give priority to the collaboration which is reflected on an institutional level by flexibility and willingness to adapt (Kezar, 2006).

Inter-organisational relationships and power

Differences in power between partner organisations are seen to play an influential role in collaborations. In interactive situations, weaker partner organisations can feel their identity and culture threatened by more influential partners (Selsky and Parker, 2005). To establish a healthy collaboration the institutional barriers hindering the collaboration need to be defined and addressed (Robinson *et al.*, 2003). The reality in many collaborations is that stakeholders are separated into primary and secondary partners, where secondary partners only have a nominal role in the partnership as found by Slack (2004) who evaluated a HEFCE funded initiative to engage communities in the planning of widening participation initiatives.

Flora and Hirt (2010) examined a collaboration between HEIs to create a Higher Education Centre to share resources to deliver separate academic courses. They found that the employees of the larger institutions perceived the incentives for involvement to be altruistic, focusing on the overall goal of the collaboration, whereas, those from the smaller institutions tended to be more aware of the financial benefits of the partnership. Collaborations are more often joined in creation and delivery of service or activity but keep management and funding separated from the collaborative initiative (Tett *et al.*, 2001). Larger collaborations can benefit from having an independent administration centre as this can bring balance and reduce the tension of competition and collaboration (Flora and Hirt, 2010). With an administration centre helping with the facilitating

of a collaboration the partners can give more attention to the functioning of the collaboration (Keyton *et al.*, 2008).

Another aspect of the interorganisational dynamics is the dichotomy of competition versus collaboration. There is an intricate tension in the competition and collaboration relationships between organisations (Wu and Pangarkar, 2010). Increasingly, organisations who were competitors are choosing to collaborate. For those involved, this means working together with someone they used to perceive as their competitor (Stein and Short, 2001). A competitive environment does not encourage collaboration as noted by Fear and Barnett (2003) who examined a collaborative health promotion initiative and concluded that if the partner organisations had been willing to give more power to the collaboration it could have been more effective as an entity. Burke (2006) explored the purchaser provider relationships in nurse education and concluded that even though competition can give better value for money and improve quality, there is also need for constructive partnership as ultimately, the aim of both, the purchaser and the provider, is to offer the best they can to the student, service and the patient. In both of the above studies, it is possible to see the importance of the shared goal in creating effective collaborations and at least in part overcoming the tension created by competition.

Differing organisational cultures, requirements and ways of operating, need to be taken into account when planning collaborative work (Walsh and Jones, 2005). Additionally, the way in which the individuals in different organisations contribute to collaborations can vary greatly. For example, community collaborations often rely on voluntary participation from the members of a community, however this can lead to misrepresented stakeholder groups, especially as volunteers have been found to have lower commitment level to collaborations than paid members of staff (El Ansari and Phillips, 2001b). As seen above, there are multiple factors affecting the organisational dynamics. Yet, if the partners remain committed to the reason that brought them together, they will not become distractions.

The individual in a collaboration

Collaborations do not exist without the individual partners, nor do they take place in a vacuum removed from the organisational context. An organisational climate on its own is not sufficient to form an effective

collaboration; collaboration needs to spark individuals' desire to be part of it (Buse and Harmer, 2007). Recognising the individual, as well as the group, within a partnership is important (Henneman *et al.*, 1995). People in a collaboration are part of determining its success however, there are internal and external drivers that affect the structure of a collaboration and the individual's participation in it (Henneman *et al.*, 1995; Munro and Russell, 2007). For the individual to participate, the cost benefit relationship has to be balanced favourably (El Ansari and Phillips, 2001a; Holmes *et al.*, 2010). Selden (2006) examined collaborations in the early education setting in the US, and discovered that the higher the intensity of the collaboration, the more satisfied the participants were with the benefits they received from the collaboration.

A basic tenet of a collaboration is that the power is shared. Participation is based on valuing knowledge and expertise rather than title (Henneman *et al.*, 1995) which enables participants to be more productive and effective as they do not feel the need to compete with each other. However, a collaborative team is not unified entity but a collection of professionals with distinct identities and backgrounds (Lingard *et al.*, 2004). Understanding the wider context in which the collaboration is set is essential (Osborne, 2006). As highlighted earlier, there are multiple levels to consider. From an individual perspective, the level of caring, personal knowledge and social support are believed to be crucial factors in establishing a functional collaborative relationship (Hayward *et al.*, 2000). Furthermore, staff participating in collaborative projects are balancing the demands of their normal job with the demands of the collaboration (Freeth, 2001).

Finding the enthusiasts

Without individuals collaborations would not happen. People collaborate, not organisations - organisations collaborate through people. Holdsworth et al (1995) noted the need for motivated and involved stakeholders when looking at primary care teams' involvement in research collaborations. Wills and Ellison (2007) found marked differences in the expectations on collaborative success, even though their participants were equally able to identify the benefits they perceived from the current partnership initiatives, they could be divided into three distinct groups of enthusiasts, cynics and sceptics based on their views on potential of future partnerships. There is a potential to harness the excitement of

the enthusiasts to the benefit of the collaboration. This can be seen reflected in a recommendation by Freeth (2001) not to underestimate the role of local enthusiasts in a collaboration to encourage others and facilitate a successful collaboration.

Participants can either be seen to be motivated by self interest or the benefit of others (Martin *et al.*, 2004). De Cremer and Van Lange (2001) who identified participants either as prosocials or proselfs with prosocials showing a greater tendency towards cooperation than proselfs. They concluded that prosocials were more likely to reciprocate their partner's actions and felt more socially responsible for the groups' interests than proselfs. People with prosocial tendencies view other's past behaviour as irrelevant in their decision to respond in a current situation, whereas individuals with highly inbuilt norms for reciprocity alter their actions in regards to other's past behaviour (Perugini and Gallucci, 2001). Prosocials have also been found to have a strong desire for equality in outcomes and exhibit stronger feelings of social responsibility and engage more in behaviour assimilation than proselfs (De Cremer and Van Lange, 2001). In more practical terms this means that people orientated towards cooperation think collaboration is intelligent behaviour whereas individuals with competitive or individualistic tendencies think collaboration is a sign of weakness (Komorita and Parks, 1995).

Relational dynamics

In a collaborative setting, people are not only seen as singular entities, the individuals who they are, but also as a person representing a specific group or organisation (Bartunek *et al.*, 1996). Consequently, interaction in groups takes place between individuals who represent their groups' interests as well as themselves (Richter *et al.*, 2005). According to social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979), people draw their identity from group membership and their social identity is maintained by comparing self with in-group members (the group they belong to) against the out-group (the group they are not part of), which will affect the interactions between the groups. In collaborative settings the group boundaries may blur, challenging the individual with two alternative identities that do not coincide. In a collaborative situation individuals have mixed loyalties due to potentially competing interests of being representatives of their

organisations as well as members of the collaboration (Bartunek *et al.*, 1996; Keyton *et al.*, 2008).

Maintenance of group goals over time is fundamental to group empowerment as is identifying common themes between groups which enables collaboration between the groups (Bartunek *et al.*, 1996). Group identity, self-efficacy, uncertainty and expectations also affect collaboration (Komorita and Parks, 1995). It is known that the institutions and organisations people are part of affect the way they perceive the choices, assets and liabilities around them as well as providing individuals with rationales, values, information and options (LeTendre, 1996). However, it is difficult to define whether attitudes are influenced by individual, communal or organisational motives hence it is important to review each attitude within the context in which it was expressed (Huxham and Hibbert, 2008). There is a recognition that collaborations by nature are multi level entities. Communication takes place face to face on an individual level, at team level both within and among collaborative groups and at organisational levels between representatives, however most of the communication that happens takes place at the team level (Keyton *et al.*, 2008). This highlights the importance of relational dynamics in the life of collaborations.

It's a process, not an instant fix

The passing of time is an important aspect of collaborations. If the aim of the collaboration is to change how things are done in practice, then instant results cannot be expected. Bringing change is a slow process of changing the way things are done through social interaction (Huzzard *et al.*, 2010). As mentioned earlier, the development of trust is vital for a well functioning collaboration. The trust develops as relationships deepen with time, without trust collaboration is either a failure or riddled with interpersonal issues interfering with the overall goal (Trickett and Espino, 2004). There is a sense of on-going process about collaborations from how they began to how they will finish. This is highlighted in the process framework which defines collaboration happening over time through formal and informal interactions between organisations in the shape of repeated negotiations, plans and execution of the plans (Thomson and Perry, 2006).

Keyton *et al.* (2008) challenge the role of communication in existing models of the process of collaboration. They see communication being the

essence of collaboration and as offering the answer to the problem of explaining interactions at multiple levels. I agree with Keyton et al.'s (2008) suggestion of the centrality of communication in the process. However, I would expand communication to social interaction. I see social interaction as encompassing communication but also taking into account the wider context in which the communication happens. Earlier I introduced various concepts which have been found to have an impact on collaboration, either at an individual or organisational level. If using social interaction as a focus of the process of collaboration, it is possible to make sense of these concepts. Trust, power relations, commitment, organisational differences, ownership, support, to name just few, are all indication of on-going social interaction. I believe the context of collaboration is vital in understanding the process of collaboration and this is best achieved by focusing on social interactions.

Theorising about collaboration

This section focuses on the theoretical aspect of collaboration. There are three different areas which will be examined. The first highlights the wide field within which collaborations are being studied. The next part examines traditional organisational theory before closing the section with postmodern organisational theory and social constructionism in particular.

A wide field

Collaboration is a widely researched area but as it often crosses disciplinary boundaries there is no single body of research that covers the complete phenomena of what collaboration is. Collaboration has been a central concept in different disciplines at different points in history, most enduringly in anthropology (Trickett and Espino, 2004). In the organisational and business literature collaboration is studied in great detail in the light of productivity and profits. In social sciences, especially in sociology and psychology, the focus has been on people's participation and motivation for action in collaborative settings. In organisational research psychologists traditionally focus on individuals' relationships with the workplace whereas sociologists focus on the broader picture of the organisations and institutions in the place of work (Cappelli, 2006). Social network theory has been utilised in sociology to examine organisational interaction either at the micro level between individuals or on a macro level between organisations by focusing on the number and strength of

connections between actors and the level of cohesiveness (Haveman and Khaire, 2006) and thus being able to highlight power and inequality issues in organisations. The five bases of social power: coercive power, reward power, legitimate power, referent power and expert power, as proposed by French and Raven (2001), have been influential in the study of power dynamics at an individual level and in a group setting since being published in 1959.

However, the methods employed in social science studies of organisations, especially in psychology, have often been empirical and laboratory based. An example of this would be, the prisoner's dilemma (Kelley, 2000) where participants are given the option to cooperate or defect in hypothetical situations. Rather than concentrating on an actual process that is taking place in its natural settings most studies have created artificial collaborations. Yet, they offer potential insight into collaborative working and individuals' motivation in different situations. Regardless of the differences in the settings of collaborations in real life, there are also common issues, such as trust, that are applicable across the collaborations enabling studies to build a broader picture of collaborations (Huxham and Hibbert, 2008)

Traditional organisational theory and models of collaboration

Much of what organisational theory, in its traditional form, has to offer to research on collaborations has its foundations on studies of teamwork. After reviewing studies on small groups (Tuckman, 1965) proposed a model of group development which included four phases: forming (dialogue, learning), storming (cross section of perspectives), norming (shared perspective) and performing (participating in activities of development). The model was revisited some ten years later and a last stage of adjourning (institutionalisation) was added to the model (Tuckman and Jensen, 1977). The model has been highly influential in studies about group processes and is still used to this day (Huzzard *et al.*, 2010). Tuckman's model could be seen reflected in Linden's (2002) four phases of collaboration which used the metaphor of personal relationships to describe the phases which were courtship, getting serious, commitment and leaving a legacy. The use of the metaphor of a relationship captures well the changing nature of collaborations as they develop, the phases can be seen building on each other. Thomson and Perry (2006) adapted a previous framework by Ring and Van de Ven (1994) to highlight the emergent nature of collaborations

through cycles of negotiation, commitment and implementation. The phase-models of collaboration suggest that collaboration is a developing process, almost cyclical in its nature that when the stage of adjourning is reached, it opens an opportunity for a new cycle starting from forming again. Norris-Tirrel and Clay (2010) propose a conceptual model of lifecycle of collaboration, with five phases, based on previous research to capture the stages of developing collaborations.

In addition to the stages of collaboration, the focus of organisational theory has been on the process models of collaboration which focus around the input, processes and outputs (Gaboury *et al.*, 2009). Thomson and Perry (2006) proposed five key dimensions that play a role in the process of collaboration: governance, administration, organizational autonomy, mutuality and norms of trust and reciprocity. Within all of these dimensions, the important factor is finding a balance, both within and between the dimensions, which enables meaningful collaboration across diverse partners. Much of the research within traditional organisational theory has focused on identifying the factors that enable effective collaboration to be formed (Hardy *et al.*, 2005). Yet, this focus on the antecedents and predecedents has at times meant that the developing process of collaboration as a whole has not been explored as much as it could have been to enable a deeper understanding of the totality of the process (Thomson and Perry, 2006).

Social constructionism as an organisational theory

Traditionally organisational theory has been anchored in a modern and positivist view point. In this framework organisational action is reducible to a rational account and, if possible, to an universally applicable formula. Often individuals and the organisation have been studied as two completely separate, singular entities (Hosking, 2006). Organisational dynamics are viewed as mechanical processes: defining the input, process and output. However, this traditional viewpoint is being challenged by postmodern organisational theory which adapts itself easier to studying increasingly flexible ways of organisational working (Casey, 2002).

Postmodern theories, including social constructionism, have been gaining a foothold in the arena of organisational theory for the last few decades (Hosking and McNamee, 2006b). Today's society is postmodern (Vaillancourt

Rosenau, 2001). These changes in the society are in turn reflected in changes in the organisational DNA, cultural changes have increased the need of flexibility in organisations (Parker, 1992). The relationships and the context are central in social constructionism. This is reflected in the way organisations are perceived as 'relational nuclei' rejecting the foundations of modern organisation as a self contained unit with solid structures (Gergen, 2001). It also impacts the way theory is created, theory depends on the context and has its foundations in the language and the way it is used; there is a non-permanency about constructions, they are ever changing and changeable (Crowther and Green, 2004). Actions and words are understood in the light of the context (Blantern and Anderson-Wallace, 2006) and the emphasis is on local knowledge above carefully constructed scientific claims of truth (Trickett and Espino, 2004). However, the dependency on language in defining epistemic has been challenged by Holt and Mueller (2011) who argued, using tobacco related cancer, as an example that social constructionists overlook the normative consideration by giving the language an undue power in the process of fixing the meaning. Furthermore it has been critiqued for the lack of objectivity it offers (Newton *et al.*, 2011).

Social constructionism's contributions to organisational theory are varied, examples are topics such as power, control, representation, identity, cultural development, participation and change (Deetz, 2000; Crowther and Green, 2004). Blantern and Anderson-Wallace (2006) have given a very applied example of social constructionism in practice, without using explicitly social constructionists terminology they explored the relational processes that take place in organisations and the patterns associated with them through examples of typical interactions that take place and how they could be interpreted. People are seen as active agents in constituting and maintaining their social contexts and in group settings it is important that there is an acceptable level of familiarity between the members (Lock and Strong, 2010). Group dynamics are an interactive space, a continuously changing entity that cannot be steered from the outside (Bouwen and Hovelynck, 2006). However, this interpretation leaves room for possible critique as it could be argued that as group dynamics are interactive, the outside influence would enter the group through its members and thus even if it could not be steered from the outside, it is possible for the outside to have an impact on the group.

Social constructionism offers a way of exploring the possibilities of different social lives emerging with changes in talk and action, whereas modernist theories are more focused on creating new medicines and advancing theory across disciplines (Hosking and McNamee, 2006a). Social constructionism is more than just a philosophical debate. It offers an alternative viewpoint to established convention or a constructive way of exploring new phenomena. Even in the field of environmental studies, which is traditionally perceived as a solely positivistic field, social constructionism has been utilized meaningfully to study issues such as climate change and carbon economy (Burningham and Cooper, 1999).

Postmodern arguments have often been claimed to be nihilistic, however, if properly developed these dialogues can have much to offer organisational science (Gergen and Thatchenkery, 2006). Providing that theorists reject the fullness of the 'hard' postmodern discourse, they can offer reason and method for studying organisations (Parker, 1992). The criticism towards social constructionism will be further discussed in the Methodology Chapter, where social constructionism as a postmodern theory will be expanded, and some of the critique answered by defining strong and weak constructionism, and examining the strengths and weaknesses attached to it (see section Critique of social constructionism p.49). The Methodology chapter will concentrate on social constructionism as an epistemology whereas in this chapter the focus is on social constructionism as an organisational theory.

Social constructionism aims to view the organisation and the individual as an entity. Context and the actor are intertwined, without separating one from the other or attempting to reduce the result to a single formula. People are seen as independent actors, who are ever changing, not just passive objects influenced by the culture and context they are in (Sarbin and Kitsuse, 1994; Crowther and Green, 2004). Relations help to anchor social constructionism and for example describing family as a social construction does not imply impermanency, instead it emphasizes the collective rather than individual effort in creating it (Holt and Mueller, 2011). Social constructionism aims to raise awareness of how environment is constructed through interactions with other people, for example professional groups develop codes of practice specific to their profession through interaction (Lock and Strong, 2010). Social constructionism suggests a possibility of a relational alternative to modernists'

narratives of rationality, where meaningful action always has its roots within relationships (Paré and Larner, 2004; Hosking and McNamee, 2006a). Postmodern theories are not claiming to have superior power of explanation, however, the explanations they offer resonate more with the age we live in than modernism does (Parker, 1992).

Much of organisational theory has focused on team work rather than collaborations between organisations specifically. Gergen (2001) proposes perceiving organisations as relational nuclei, and how these nuclei are meshed and dialogue with multiple other nuclei, within and outside the organisation. These multiple connections both increase the accountability of the nuclei and strengthen it. Relationships have such pre-eminence to organisations that no single individual can be seen to make autonomous decisions, all decisions are seen in the light of the relationships and become intelligible through the relational process (Gergen, 2001). Humans have the ability to relate and react to each other in varied and multiple ways unlike atoms that have limited and set ways of relating to each other (Crowther and Green, 2004). Flexibility is essential in postmodern organisations enabling people to adapt to new rationalities and languages (Parker, 1992). There is an increasing awareness of a shift in focus of organisational studies. There is a call for more organisational studies based on narratives, focusing on description rather than theory building (Crowther and Green, 2004). Furthermore, there is a lack of studies exploring organisational practices and how they reflect in relation to wider social networks in which they are located (Casey, 2002).

Where next?

This section will focus on the need for further research on collaborations. The first part of the section is a brief summary of what is important in collaborations. The second part of the section discusses factors that have been highlighted by previous research as areas that need more work. The section closes with thoughts on why more research is needed.

Pick and mix tips for good collaboration

Multiple factors are known to affect the success of a collaborative initiative from the point of view of both individuals and organisations. One factor that has been addressed by both literature on collaboration and social exchange literature is the cost-benefit relationship. Participation in a

collaboration often takes place in addition to the normal work role and for the individual to participate it is essential that some of the goals of the collaboration align with their own goals. The costs and benefits have to be at the right level in regards to each other for reciprocity to take place.

Another factor highlighted through the literature is perceived support and how it enhances participation as well as organisational citizenship behaviour (Ladd and Henry, 2000). Furthermore, the importance of trust has been highlighted in both social dilemmas and collaborative literature to hold an important place in cooperation. Regardless of the wide range of research into collaboration and cooperation, the aspiration and motivation behind people's continued participation has not been covered in detail. The factors affecting the success of collaboration as well as factors affecting peoples' decisions while collaborating have been explored in depth but there is still a need to discover why individuals want to be part of a collaboration in the first place (Komorita and Parks, 1995). Research across disciplines has highlighted factors that enable successful collaborations, yet it has not led to all collaborations becoming well functioning partnerships. This suggests that more research is needed into the totality of collaboration, the involvement for the participants themselves as well as the process of a developing collaboration.

Where scholars see a need for more research on collaboration

Stein and Short (2001) draw attention to the fact that a limited amount of research is done in HE settings on collaborative work. This is even more poignant as it is a relatively new phenomenon to work together in multiple areas with institutions and individuals who were previously perceived as competitors. Traditionally collaboration in higher education settings equated to a shared research project between individuals in different organisations. However, as described earlier, there has been a shift in HE organisations to being more collaborative outside the conventional remit. Yet much of the research in HE still views collaborations in terms of measuring links between collaboration and productivity through a bibliometric approach, where shared authorship on publications is used as the measure of collaboration and the main resource for these studies are citation and journal databases such as web of knowledge (Abramo *et al.*, 2009) rather than exploring the emerging collaborative efforts themselves. Selsky and Parker (2005) suggest that there is a need for future

research concentrating on the social aspects of collaboration, such as values and motivations, as well as modes of operation and changing roles. In a similar vein Thomson and Perry (2006) express a desire for more research about the process of collaboration, which they believe has been overlooked whilst focusing on antecedents and enhancers of collaboration. Even though it could be argued that many of these studies focusing on the antecedents have been set in a traditional company based organisational setting rather than in the higher education arena; however, it appears that these factors such as trust (Henneman *et al.*, 1995) and sense of ownership (Hayward *et al.*, 2000) are transferable across the settings. Kezar (2005) calls for shift of emphasis in collaborative research in higher education away from the individual factors to less researched area of the process of collaboration. Furthermore, previous research has also highlighted the need for a shift in the focus of the studies for more descriptive, qualitative accounts of examining organisational practices and collaborative work (Crowther and Green, 2004; Davies, 2010).

Hardy et al. (2005) propose a theoretical model of creating effective collaborations through discourse. The model suggests that collective identity is created through conversations, both verbal and written which then enables collective action to take place aided by the tension of cooperative and assertive talk. Their model is not a stage by stage approach but suggests an on-going process of relationships and action aided by and created through conversations. Similarly Keyton et al. (2008) supported the central role of communication in the process of collaboration as discussed earlier in this chapter. I agree with the view that the nature of collaborations is on-going and that emphasis on the discourse enables the focus on multiple levels of collaborations simultaneously as suggested by the above studies. However, I propose that it is vital to take into account the context of these interactions as well. Solely focusing on the discourse will leave out the tension that the context brings to those conversations.

I agree with the notion that conversations have power in forming and sustaining collaborations, however, I further propose that it is essential to include the context of these interactions in the analysis of the process of collaboration. Like Hardy *et al.* (2005), I believe collaboration is a social achievement developed through repeated interactions between partners. However, I would expand this by suggesting that it is vital to anchor the

discourse within the social context it takes place to understand the process of collaboration better. Furthermore, I share the view of Lingard *et al.* (2004) that teamwork and collaboration have become idealised in research. I propose that to counteract this there needs to be an increasing focus on exploring collaboration through the participants' perceptions, aiming to reflect their views and lived experiences of collaboration.

Why more research?

It could be suggested that there is more than sufficient research on what makes collaborations work and conversely factors related to their failure. Why then continue studying collaborations? As highlighted above the majority of organisational theory is modern in its view of organisation and society. The emphasis has been on protocols and form and yet we know little about the totality of what collaborations are for those involved in them. There is a definite shift needed to expand the understanding of organisations in the postmodern era. The ever emerging technological advances and changing methods of social interaction alone stamp modern theories with an outdated presence. Knowledge is ever progressing; modern theories have enabled multitudes of organisations to work better but in the light of changing culture, there is time for a change in the way organisations are viewed. The journey of discovery leads to ever deepening understanding but never quite there. A similar notion was expressed by Apostle Paul: "For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known" (1 Cor 13:2, NIV). Knowledge is evolving as is our understanding of selves with it. It is a process. The paradox is the more you know, the less you know. In a sense, how do we know when we have reached the ultimate understanding? We do not, but we keep searching, explaining, theorising.

Conclusions - the next steps

The social process of collaboration in higher education settings is an under explored area. The benefits of collaborations are well researched as are the factors enabling collaboration but how does all this relate to the experience of being part of a collaboration. If collaboration is the way of the future for enabling more research, better education and an increased knowledge base in higher education then it is essential to gain an understanding of the experience of the individuals who are the building blocks of collaboration. As stipulated

above, collaborations do not occur in a vacuum. There are a multitude of factors affecting collaboration and therefore it is essential that the collaborative experience is explored in a holistic way. Rather than focusing on a single factor or a single element it is necessary to look at the interplay of the context in which collaboration takes place, including the different partner organisations. Collaboration is a socially constructed phenomenon, therefore it should be studied by looking at how the process is enabled by interaction between partners and organisations. The previous theoretical models offer a valid starting point for exploring collaboration through on-going interaction happening at multiple levels. There are many excellent pieces of research already in the knowledge base, but there is a need to look at the process of collaboration as a socially constructed entity.

In this study I intend to draw from the knowledge bases of different disciplines, such as psychology and sociology as well as the organisational literature that have studied collaborations in order to start to build a holistic view of collaboration. In my opinion it is necessary to gain an understanding of the social process of being part of a collaboration at an individual and organisational level. In order to enable future collaborations to achieve more than previous projects, it is important to focus on the individuals who are on the coal face of the collaboration. There are many overarching factors that influence the success of collaborations but above all there is a need to begin to understand how collaboration is constructed through social interaction. Modern organisational theory offers advice for productive collaboration in the form of one plus one equals two. However, I believe that it is time to explore collaboration with a postmodern lens, allowing the individual and the context to be intertwined in constructing the story of collaboration.

Chapter 3. Methodology and Methods

This chapter aims to give a framework of the theoretical background for the study and describe the practical steps of undertaking the research. In the first half of the chapter the focus is on the methodology, the role of theoretical frameworks and research paradigms is discussed and the stance taken in this study is presented. The second half of the chapter gives details of the study design and the process and protocol that were followed in this research.

Methodology

Importance of theoretical frameworks

Undertaking a research project is a journey of constant decisions and comparisons. With a research question in mind, the next step for any researcher is to contemplate how they might best answer this question. On the face of it, the starting point is relatively simple: qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods. Each comes with their own particular strengths and weaknesses. A rough and very overly generalised division would be to say that qualitative methods are used more in human sciences and focused on understanding a phenomenon whereas, quantitative methods are more used in natural sciences and have their focus on explaining a phenomenon (Lock and Strong, 2010). Choosing qualitative methods leaves a novice researcher to navigate their way through a multitude of 'ologies' of different types and levels. In order to truly engage in any research, but especially in qualitative methods, it is important to know the ontological, epistemological and methodological underpinnings of the research, and the impact these decisions have on the research project. However, starting a qualitative research project, with a background in psychology, can be slightly bewildering, as traditionally the majority of research in psychology tends to be quantitative and strictly positivist and if qualitative research is undertaken, not much thought has been given to the ontology or epistemology behind it (McLeod, 2001).

It is important to know what each step of the research process is aiming to achieve to ensure the usefulness of the results (McLeod, 2001). Knowing the theoretical underpinnings will help to map out the project to a wider context and community. Conceptual frameworks enable researchers to build on previous

work by others in their field (Bordage, 2009). The theoretical framework of a study forms scaffolding around it which enables others to make sense of what has been done, why and how. The value of describing the process has often been overlooked. Qualitative researchers are criticised for not offering enough details of the methodological background of the study when writing about it (Maggs-Rapport, 2001). Thus, metaphorically, leaving their readers to leap from one plank of the scaffolding to another, in order to make sense of what has been done and to guess the reasoning behind it. In Table 4, a definition is given for key terminology that is often used when discussing theoretical frameworks as well as stating the position taken in this research on each of these aspects. The reasoning for the position taken will be explained in the course of this chapter, hence the table's role is to act as a point of reference.

	Ontology	**Epistemology**	**Methodology**	**Methods**
Definition	Nature of reality	Nature of knowledge	Nature of/ approach to research	Techniques used to gather the information
Position of this research	Towards the relativist end of the spectrum	Constructionist	Interpretivist	Interviews & documentary analysis

Table 4 Definitions of terms, as used by Bunniss and Kelly (2010), and the stance taken in this research on each spectrum

Research paradigms

A theoretical framework of a research project gives the study its' philosophical underpinnings (Weaver and Olson, 2006). Being clear about the theoretical paradigm informing the decisions of the research process is vital. It gives clarity and forms common understanding for the readers by enabling them to frame the research within their own previous knowledge and context through the theoretical connections. The four commonly recognised paradigms in research are positivism, post-positivism, interpretivism and critical social theory (Weaver and Olson, 2006; Bunniss and Kelly, 2010). As touched on in the literature review most empirical research traditionally embraces positivism, aiming for an absolute truth. At the other end of the continuum, critical social theory and interpretivism acknowledge the relativity of truth. Interpretivism is a commonly applied framework in qualitative methods as it embraces subjectivity and inter-subjectivity of observation. Within the interpretivist paradigm, reality

and knowledge are viewed as subjective and changeable with no singlular, definitive truth available. Multiple interpretations of reality exist simultaneously, with multiple ways of arriving at these interpretations (Bunniss and Kelly, 2010).

The paradigm a researcher chooses as their starting point for the journey also guides the epistemological, ontological and methodological decisions that are made. Ontology is the consideration of the nature of being and reality (Packer and Goicoechea, 2000). Views of reality vary from realist to relativist. At the realist end of the spectrum, there is the belief that there is just one absolute reality whilst at the relativist end of the spectrum all reality is seen as being relative. Epistemologically researchers are on a continuum leading from objective to subjective in their consideration of the nature of knowledge (Packer and Goicoechea, 2000; Bunniss and Kelly, 2010). Together, the paradigm, the ontology and the epistemology a researcher aligns themselves to, will guide them in their selection of methodology, the approach to doing the research. Different frameworks will emphasize and focus on different aspects of the topic under study (Bordage, 2009). Consequently, it is essential to ensure that the chosen methodology is the most appropriate for answering the research question.

Methodological issues in qualitative research

Defining qualitative methods is not easily done as they cut across a number of disciplines such as psychology, sociology and anthropology. Trying to cross the disciplinary boundaries can be discomforting as each discipline has their own, often ever so slightly differing, approach and favour one methodology over another (Maggs-Rapport, 2001; Rapport *et al.*, 2005). Furthermore, the field of qualitative methods is both fractured and complex (Rapport, 2004) with researchers creating a variety of sub methodologies to publicise their own particular ways of using qualitative methods.

Rapport et al. (2005) introduced a concept of ‘edgelands’ of qualitative research, which are emerging as researchers take different epistemological stands, allowing the research to be more of a process of discovery, with room for manoeuvrability, rather than a rigid framework. There is need for innovation, but the result of the innovation should be advancing qualitative methods as a field, not muddying the waters by creating ever increasing number of

methodologies with minutely close resemblance to each other, without offering any significant advantage (Travers, 2009).

Qualitative research methods, with strong theoretical foundations, will offer insight to the studied topic as well as applicability (Reeves *et al.*, 2008). Yet, the methods and methodology that have been used are inconsequential, if there is no integrity in the process of conducting the research and especially in the way it is accounted. For van Manen (2006) the difficulty of qualitative methods lies in the sensitivity and creativity required from the researcher as an interpreter and a writer. The role of the researcher is instrumental in qualitative data interpretation and analysis, interpretation itself can be seen as one of the most significant tasks that a researcher undertakes (Morse, 2009; Morse *et al.*, 2009).

The challenge with qualitative data, is presenting it in a way that retains the richness yet is readable to the audience it is aimed at (Morse *et al.*, 2009). The tension is balancing the richness of detail with description that is more readily applied to a general situation (Todres, 1998). In qualitative methods the researcher has an integral role in engaging themselves in the search for understanding and truth, in the process of interpretation. McLeod (2001) observes that “it is the capacity of the inquirer to see and understand that makes the difference” (p.54). Qualitative research, when well carried out, gets its integrity from the author engaging in critical reflectivity and the intertwining of the internal experience and the wider historical consciousness (McLeod, 2001). Qualitative methods have been viewed as an inferior option by mainstream scientific research, however increasing numbers of researchers are applying them to research everyday, commonplace topics (Lock and Strong, 2010).

Essential to following an interpretative paradigm is seeking to understand the subject of the study through diverse interpretations (Bunniss and Kelly, 2010). Openness and honesty give accountability to the interpretation. Interpretation is the essence of research, of all research (van Manen, 2006). Truth is always relative; it requires interpretation in order to be understood. Even statistics on their own have no meaning, only in the hands of a capable interpreter, who is able to translate them and relate the results and their implications to a wider picture, do they become meaningful to other people. Unless you are able to interpret and explain the results of research, whether

qualitative or quantitative, they offer no value to you or others, they are just numbers or words with no relevance.

Generalisability in qualitative research

A next step from interpreting and explaining results is seeing how they can be applied to a wider setting. A crude measure of the external validity of research findings is their generalisability, which is a debated issue in the arena of qualitative research, especially in health related areas (Holloway, 2005). Qualitative researchers often face critique over the account of generalisability of their findings and the value the findings have in informing policy makers and practice (Lipscomb, 2012). Denzin and Giardina (2010) argue that discourse on evidence based practice is unwittingly creating an elite group separated from others by being willing to embrace validity, generalisability and replicability thus sidelining qualitative research. This is reflected in a perception of qualitative research as second rate that is often held by policy makers, funding agencies and clinicians (Tong *et al.*, 2007).

Often the idea of generalisbility to the critics means studying a statistically random sample from a population with certain characteristics and then generalising the findings to other populations with the same characteristics (Morse, 2012). However, holding on to this account of generalisability overlooks the strength of qualitative research - being able to capture social reality, to study a phenomena that is not measured in statistics (Silverman, 2000). Yet, claiming insight into a phenomena does not give permission to generalise qualitative findings (Lipscomb, 2012). When talking about generalisability in qualitative research, the emphasis is on theoretical inferences rather than empirical generalisations (Williams, 2002). As highlighted by Morse (2012) the generalising in qualitative research focuses on concepts and theoretical findings which have been removed from the original setting and compared to others.

Qualitative researchers recognise the need to conduct research in a trustworthy and reliable manner to give credibility to findings (Avis, 2007). According to Silverman (2000) reliable methods and valid conclusions are more important than having the right political attitude. In order to generalise from qualitative findings it is essential that the sample reflects the general characteristics of the wider group (Williams, 2002). When generalising

qualitative findings, the emphasis is on looking for similar characteristics or problems to reconceptualise the findings. The qualitative findings are used to generalise to a theory rather than a population yet the generalisations that can be made are only moderate, there may be shared evidence but researchers should be aware of the complexity of the underlying structures (Williams, 2002). Generalisability in qualitative research is about examining the findings of a study in relation to others and looking at them collectively to draw wider conclusions (Willig, 2008).

Social constructionism as an epistemology

Without fail social constructionism seems to evoke debate whenever mentioned (Derksen, 2010). To complicate matters, social constructionism is not easily defined as a single entity, confusing both critics and supporters alike (Stam, 2001). However it appears that over recent years, social constructionism as a movement has calmed down from vigorous, youthful radicalism to sedate middle-agedness. Stam (2001) believes that social constructionism "has left the gritty, exciting and perhaps even dangerous downtown streets of academia and has settled comfortably into its suburbia" (p. 291).

Social constructionism is often defined by its opposition to modernism, stating what it is not (Blantern and Anderson-Wallace, 2006), rather than being defined by what it is. Social constructionism opposes positivism, highlighting the deficiencies of positivist research (Fopp, 2008). Social constructionists disagree with the realist view of knowledge being a direct reflection of what exists (Schwandt, 2000). Social constructionism, like other postmodern theories, is not focused on challenging the technological advances modernist science presents, rather it wants to raise an alarm over the status quo of truth that is attached to them (Gergen and Thatchenkery, 2006; Lock and Strong, 2010). Instead of believing in absolute, rational truth postmodernists believe that "the 'out there' is constructed by our discursive conceptions of it and these conceptions are collectively sustained and continually renegotiated in the process of making sense" (Parker, 1992, p. 223). Wittgenstein suggested that there is no single correct way of understanding and communicating rather both are contextual (Lock and Strong, 2010). Knowledge is located between people rather than inside or outside an individual mind (Fuller and Loogma, 2009). Social

constructionism challenges the perception of science being simply *about* the world by encouraging us to see it "as *in* the world" (Deetz, 2000, p. 735, emphasis original). Social constructionism is often perceived to be able give voice to the marginalised groups through shifting emphasis to local concerns and practical issues as they are constructed by the community (Gergen and Thatchenkery, 2004).

Language has an active role in social constructionism. Postmodern theorists see language as a product of cultural process (Gergen and Thatchenkery, 2006). Unlike modernist theories where language is perceived as an exact representation of internal and external realities, the emphasis in social constructionism is on language as an active agent, playing a part in the formation and actualisation of social realities (Crowther and Green, 2004). Language actively creates reality rather than just being a representation of it. If meaning is gained from interactions, then all theory can be seen to be a local construction, being a product of contextual relationships (Hosking and McNamee, 2006a). In effect, the landscape of social action is both mutual and relational (Blantern and Anderson-Wallace, 2006) where the emphasis is given to prevailing attitudes (Holt and Mueller, 2011).

Critique of social constructionism

When critiquing social constructionism, the question of truth is often raised. Supporters of social constructionism argue that acknowledging multiple truths is not a licence to lie rather, it is searching for a perspective that captures the community view, not just individual preferences, before being able to decide on what is true or false (Deetz, 2000). The search for truth is highlighted by Deetz (2000), who gives an example of a child in kindergarten defining categories in unexpected ways to the presumed norm, concluding that "[t]he presumed real, empirical, and unchosen often miss the value-laden, theory-based observation" (p. 734).

Social constructionism can be divided into weak (the terms mild or contextual are also used) constructionism and strong (or strict) constructionism (Schwandt, 2000; Fopp, 2008). Often criticism of social constructionism makes no distinction between weak and strong constructionism (Newton *et al.*, 2011). Much of the critique, especially from realists, is aimed at the strong almost

extremist stance of constructionism and yet the majority of empirical studies employ weak constructionism (Burningham and Cooper, 1999). It is almost as if the baby is being thrown out with the bath water, weak constructionism has not been examined for its own merits rather the negatives seen in strong constructionism are applied to it without examining to see if they fit. However if researchers do not specify their stance in relation to their ontological view then the criticism is deserved. If there is no shared understanding between the reader and the writer of what is seen and believed to be real by the writer, then the reader has no foundations for making their inferences of what the writer has concluded and therefore their criticism is justified.

Weak and strong constructionism

Strong constructionism believes there to be no features of the world that exists outside discourse and social interaction therefore rejecting the power of nature as an independent agent (Burningham and Cooper, 1999). Weak constructionism neither rejects the reality of the material world nor does it accept dominant expressions as an absolute without taking into account the human actors supporting these values for their own benefit (Fopp, 2008). Admitting that some perspectives are powerful, not just socially constructed, separates weak constructionism from strong constructionism and its detachedness (Fopp, 2008).

Strong constructionism is seen to have a nihilistic stance on knowledge (Schwandt, 2000). Strong constructionists believe that there is no relationship between representation and reality whereas weak constructionists believe it is possible to explore some level of correspondence between reality and representation (Fuller and Loogma, 2009). However some argue that there are no case studies that have applied strong constructionism in its strictest sense hence raising the question if strong constructionist analysis is even possible (Best, 1993).

Weak constructionism believes that some categories, such as citizenship and awards for bravery, are socially constructed (Pinker, 2002). These factors can be seen to be part of social reality and they depend on ‘brute’ facts, such as rivers and mountains which can be seen as objective (Searle, 1995), whereas strong constructionism do not believe that ‘brute’ facts exist but argue that they

are socially generated. Roth (2010) reviewed the moral construction of risk and concluded that both weak and strong constructionism had contributions to offer to the debate but believed that weak constructionism was the more useful, due to its ontological position that enabled the researcher to focus on risk and morality rather than what risk is perceived to be real. Strong constructionism denies the existence of an objective reality, hence social problems exist unrelated to concrete objects or fact (Lister, 2010). Strong constructionism enables debate on an arbitrary level without being constraint by the natural. However weak constructionism allows researchers to make inferences between the objective and the social therefore being able to make connections and inferences between the two rather than functioning on separate spheres from each other. Below in Table 5 the differences between weak and strong constructionism are presented. This study aligns itself with the weak constructionist view, believing there to be 'brute' facts which are reflected in the social construction of events and experiences.

Weak constructionism	**Strong constructionism**
Existence of 'brute' facts	Everything is socially constructed
Social reality depends on 'brute' facts	Universal acceptance of concept does not make it real
Social construction is the collective agreement to assign values to objects	Language and social practices determine how reality is understood

Table 5 The differences between weak and strong constructionism

Thoughts on the process of analysis

In theoretical frameworks leaning towards postmodernism rather than positivism, there is an understanding that findings are always partial, depending on the situation and people rather than being definitive, holistic and final (Roulston, 2010). What is being represented is just partial truth, aiming to provoke thought rather than offer a definite answer and explanation of phenomena. Ultimately, the analysis is limited by the researcher's desire to engage with it. Rather than arriving at a definite endpoint, analysis is an on-going process with the option of being able to reach a different level of understanding as long as the interpreter engages in the process. Utilising ones theoretical knowledge as well as ones values and beliefs in order to form an accurate interpretation is important for qualitative researchers (Morse, 2009).

On a practical level Roulston (2010) talks about the process of starting to analyse data, how to approach the analysis with the research question, interview schedule and the transcripts and start by asking “what stands out in the data”. Searching for contradictions of our understandings and conclusions in the data helps to increase the validity of our conclusions (McLeod, 2001). Questions are essential in the process of interpretation as a way of opening up possibilities of going beyond just recounting someone else’s meaning (Laverty, 2003). Within a text there are primary and secondary levels and the secondary level can only be reached after the reader is competent at all the primary level readings (van Manen, 1997). Taking the account into context will help the interpretation to go beyond what is being said to what is meant.

Interpretation should have practical value as well as being theoretically constructive (Morse *et al.*, 2009). The aim is to create sensible meanings of an experience. Writing and reading are essential parts in the production of meaning (Laverty, 2003). According to Morse (1999) it is important to be flexible and consider the nature of the data when deciding the best way of analysing data rather than blindly following the original plan for the study even if data does not conform to it. Qualitative methods are often simplified by people who limit themselves to just one style of analysis (Addison, 1999).

There is no bias-free study (Bunniss and Kelly, 2010). Yet, being honest about the process of analysis and interpretation will give credibility to the findings. When analysing the data, it is essential to interpret both the text and the self (Geanellos, 1998). If the interpreter is aware of their own self that will enable them to either separate or infuse themselves into the analysis depending on the epistemological view they have. Analysis is a process of gaining a deeper understanding of the studied topic through interpretation. In order to be able to construct an understanding, it is important to look at the interplay between the individuals as well as the wider context in which the social interaction takes place. Through joining the interpreter, the interpreted and the context all together, it is possible to construct findings that have depth as well as breadth. The findings are not the absolute but the best possible account of their understanding of the topic the interpreter can offer. This account is one amongst a myriad of other findings which all together enable the researchers to offer a more complete picture and interpretation of the topic than before.

> *"The point of method is not to claim that, above others, there is one correct or superior mode of inquiry to discover and ascertain the truth or the true meaning of something. There is no single method, just as there is no uncontested truth." (van Manen, 1997, p. 346).*

Focusing on documentary analysis

Documents have generally been used in research purposes, especially in historical research, when no other data is available. Documents are powerful; they can make things visible and traceable as well as be the mediators and give structure to social interaction (Prior, 2003). For this reason, documents are studied to bring understanding to culture (Altheide, 1996). Also the process and meaning of social activities can be studied via documentary analysis (Altheide, 1996). Documents in research can either be used as resources, where the document is a source for studying a specific subject, or topics where the focus is the nature of the documents (Scott, 1990).

When using documents as data, it is important to consider the nature of the documents used. The process and context of the document, as well as the role it has within the target audience it was intended for, needs to be considered (Altheide, 1996). Documents have had an integral role in transferring and retaining knowledge in the history of humankind (Prior, 2003). Before making inferences and conclusions based on documents, it is important to consider the role of the document and why it was created – to examine its authenticity and accuracy (Drew, 2006). Scott (1990) suggests that when assessing documentary sources, they should be examined in the light of their authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning. By examining the dynamics between the production, consumption and context of the documents in question the researcher can add depth to their interpretation and analysis (Prior, 2003). However researchers must be aware that accepting the content of a document, without examining how and why it was produced, can be both dangerous and misleading.

The Freedom of Information Act (2000) has increased access to documents which may not have been available previously. The need for transparency in organisations is increasing and providing access to internal documents is a way of allowing the public to have more scrutiny into the internal functioning of organisations. Researchers are also benefitting from the

increased access to documents. An example of this is a study which took advantage of the increased availability of NHS board minutes over the internet due to the Freedom of Information Act and studied a randomly sampled subset of trust minutes to explore the time boards spent discussing clinical issues in the meetings (Watkins *et al.*, 2008). Official documents, both public and private, such as parish records or meeting minutes, are considered to be probably the most important document source used by social researchers (Scott, 1990). Documents are seen to have an impact on the characteristics of organisational communication through their form and material qualities (Riles, 2006).

The goal of any qualitative research, whether it be utilising documents, interviews or ethnography, is exploring social life through understanding the character and process (Altheide, 1996). In the light of this, documents, such as meeting minutes, could be considered a valuable method for exploring the life of collaboration. Scott (1990) suggests that official documents are neither impartial nor autonomous but in fact they form a vital part of the policy and administration – the organisation's life. Yet, even if the minutes and their production are part of the collaboration's life, they offer a relatively impersonal account of an entity which is first and foremost relational in its nature. Therefore, the impersonality and lack of first person account can offer a view of the collaboration which is untainted by individual accounts and experiences which give interviews their richness, and allowing the focus to be on the totality of the collaboration. It needs to be remembered that the meetings are, in effect, social events therefore the minutes are accounts of social events. Prior (2003) argues that the accounts of social events are always distorted, depending on the sincerity of the observer and their point of view. The distortion comes from the point of view of the observer and how they judge one thing to be worth accounting whilst others are deemed not worthy of being noted.

Nevertheless, it is important to remember that the validity of the analysis comes from the researcher's interpretative ability and skill of conveying their interpretations and by reflecting how the internal meaning from the analysis corresponds with received meaning constructed by the audience it relates to (Scott, 1990). The process of interpretation and the depth of analysis depends on the researcher's interaction and involvement with the documents (Altheide, 1996). Essentially, the aim is to explore what the document is referring to rather

than focusing on the meaning of a word or a sentence within the document (Prior, 2003).

Study design

The rest of this chapter focuses on presenting the outline of the study design. It is further divided into two sections. The first part focuses on the study design and changes in it. In the second part, the methods that were used are presented. To give clarity to the methods section, the interviews and documentary analysis are separated into individual sections even though there is some apparent overlap in the analysis.

Original proposal

The remit given for the PhD by the funders, was to focus on the process of the whole collaboration rather than an individual project that was part of the CETL. Another aspect that was important to the funders was encompassing both the NHS and HE sectors thus involving all the partner organisations. There was a recognition that the focus of the research should be in generating knowledge that would enable future collaborative partnerships to function better.

The original proposal for the study was to focus on the aspirations participants had about their involvement in the collaboration. It was envisaged that the exploration of the motivations for involvement would enable the identification of factors that help to sustain participants' involvement in a lengthy project. Previous research into team work and collaboration has shown the importance of the participants' engagement in the projects they are involved in. Wills and Ellison (2007) categorised the people involved in a multidisciplinary partnership into enthusiasts, cynics and sceptics according to the views the participants expressed. Further, Freeth (2001) highlighted the importance of the involvement of local enthusiast in sustaining interprofessional collaboration. Consequently, it was thought that examining the participants' involvement in relation to their aspiration would add a meaningful viewpoint to sustaining involvement in collaboration.

The study set out to explore individual aspirations in a large scale collaboration, with the specific interest of exploring if there were noticeable differences in the aspirations that could be attributed to the different level of involvement participants had. The categorisation of participants by Wills and

Ellison (2007) seemed to suggest differences in involvement in light of the participants' motivations. The study design was strongly influenced by my background in psychology through my undergraduate degree. Feeling much more comfortable with quantitative methods I decided upon a questionnaire based study. In order to construct the questionnaire, I planned to interview ten to fifteen low and high involvement participants. The topics of the interview centred on how the participants became involved in the collaboration, what their experiences of being involved in the collaboration were and their expectations of the future of the collaboration. The interviews were then to be thematically analysed and the findings would form the basis of the questionnaire. As the CETL was a relatively small population, the aim was to recruit the whole population for the questionnaire part of the study.

The sampling criteria for the interviews was to include participants from each of the workgroups and partner organisations whilst getting an even spread of people who could be classified as low or high in their involvement. A criterion for low and high was drafted and with the help of the CETL manager a list of thirty possible participants was created. After the first few interviews, it became clear that participants were not articulating their own aspirations as separate from their organisations' desires. It was possible to tease out some ideas on what motivated the participants' involvement but at the same time it was apparent that there was much more than just the aspirations that played a part in the process of involvement in the collaboration.

This, combined with my supervisors challenging me to be more open minded towards methodology and methods I was not so comfortable with, led to a re-evaluation of the research question and the best way to answer it. Throughout my degree, I had internalised a view that qualitative methods were inferior to quantitative methods. Yet, during the first few interviews I became fascinated by the narratives of the involvement that participants shared. As a consequence, the focus of the study shifted from aspirations to the whole experience of involvement and the interviews became the main method of data collection rather than just the obligatory prelude to constructing a questionnaire.

Updated proposal

The updated proposal broadened the focus from aspirations to the whole experience of being involved in a large scale collaboration. As discussed in the literature review, much is known about what the antecedents are for good collaboration whereas the process of collaboration itself is relatively under researched. Another change was that the interviews became the main data collection method of the study. There was no change to the topic guide for the interviews. As the original questions focused on encouraging the participants to tell the story of their involvement, they were also thought to be relevant for the new focus. As the topic guide was kept the same for the first few interviews and the subsequent interviews, the first few interviews were included in the data that was analysed. An additional aspect of interest, which was highlighted by the first few interviews, was the evolution of the collaboration. In the narratives, the participants were both reflecting back as well as forecasting into the future. To capture the whole lifecycle of the collaboration would have been ideally done through a series of longitudinal interviews. Longitudinal interviews enable the researchers to follow the development of a particular story or narrative over a period of time (Thomson and Holland, 2003). Longitudinal interviews are often used to capture developments around significant life events such as childbirth (Sevón, 2012). The natural transition points (such as beginning, middle and end) in the life of the CETL were too far apart to be studied during the duration of the PhD especially as the studentship did not commence until a year and half into the existence of the collaboration. The possibility for second interviews was mentioned to the participants during recruitment. It was decided that conducting second interviews offered no particular advantage as there were no distinctive transition points. Also the amount of reflection about the past and the future of the collaboration by the participants in the first interview suggested that there would not be much additional data to collect unless the follow up interviews were significantly later on in the life of the collaboration which was not an option in the timeframe available. However, there was an alternative longitudinal data source available through the meeting minutes of the operational management group of the collaboration that charted the lifecycle of CETL through its five year existence.

The original and subsequent research questions

The original aim of this research was to discover the role of individuals' aspirations and motivation in a collaborative setting. The aims of this project were to explore individuals' aspirations in the collaboration and their impact on the process and outcomes of the collaboration in an educational setting as well as exploring any changes in the aspirations. The subsequent research questions, since redesigning the study, shift the focus to the totality of the experience of involvement in the collaboration, not just aspirations. The aim is to explore individuals' experiences of being part of a large scale collaboration. The specific focus is on capturing the different perceptions and experiences of collaborational life as well as exploring how the organisational context impacts upon the participants' collaborational experience. The research question could be condensed to 'what are the different factors that have an impact on the experience of being involved in collaboration and how does the lifecycle of the collaboration affect the participants' experience of involvement?'

Methods

Aims and objectives

The aims of this project are:

1. To explore individuals' experience of a collaboration and their perceptions of the process and outcomes of a collaboration in an educational setting
2. To explore changes in the collaborative experience over a period of time and the possible factors affecting change

The aims will be reached through the following objectives:

1. To ascertain the individuals' perceptions of what collaboration is and how they see themselves as part of the collaboration
2. To ascertain the development and change in aspirations over a period of time and to establish the possible causes for the changes
3. To establish the impact of the context of collaboration on the individual, focusing specifically on the organisational context including their place of work, their workgroup and the wider collaboration
4. To construct a sketch of the CETL collaboration formed from the perceptions of the individuals involved

5. To establish the role individuals attribute the organisational context to have on their own aspirations and experience of the collaboration

The research design is a qualitative study with documentary analysis and interviews. The study received full ethical approval from Newcastle and North Tyneside LREC on 24th of July 2007 with no amendments (REC number 07/H0907/77). The study also received approval from individual R&D departments of the CETL partner organisations. The original ethical approval was for interviews, including the topic guide that was used, and the questionnaire. When the design of the study was changed, a letter was sent to the committee informing them of the change and the changes to the study were approved by the chair of the ethics committee.

Interviews

Population of interest

The population of interest for this study was a HEFCE funded Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning called CETL4HealthNE. There were approximately 120 people who were regularly involved in the initiative from the nine partner organisations, both HE and NHS. CETL offered an ideal setting to study the process of collaboration in HE through its broad aim and the number of partner organisations involved. The scale of CETL meant that it was easier to focus on the totality of the collaboration, rather than on a specific project as would be the case with a smaller collaboration. A more in-depth description of CETL is given in Chapter 4 The history and development of CETL (see p.68). The sample population only included people who were involved in CETL. As the focus of the study was to explore the experience of involvement in the collaboration, it was thought most appropriate to include those personally involved in CETL, rather than exploring the perceptions of those outside the CETL. Even though the perceptions of those outside CETL would have been valuable it would have distracted from the main focus of the study on the experience of involvement and constructing a sampling framework for recruitment would have been complicated due to the range of partner organisations involved and the different representations of CETL within each organisation.

Sampling

The three focus points for the sampling criteria were partner organisation, workgroup and level of involvement. The aim of choosing the partner organisation as sampling criteria was to ensure that participants from both HE and NHS partners were included. Including both was thought to be important to help to explore the role organisational context had on the experience of involvement. The second sampling criteria was a workgroup to ensure the capture of the width of experiences across the collaboration. The third sampling criterion used was level of involvement. It was thought that including both low and high involvement participants would offer different insights into the experience of involvement. Below, in Table 6, the sampling criteria used in the study is presented and details of the different groups within the criteria are given.

Sampling criteria	**Groups within the criteria**
Partner organisation	HE/NHS
Workgroup	IPE/PwE/PGL/PBAL/LT/HEHC[1]
Involvement	Low/High

Table 6 Groups within the sampling criteria

The partner organisation and workgroup were pre-set, presenting natural groupings to be used for sampling. There were already organisations from both HE and the NHS involved and the collaboration was divided into six different workgroups. Unlike the first two criteria, the level of involvement needed defining. The simplest way to do this was to focus on how active the participants were within workgroups and after discussions with the CETL manager on the attendance in workgroup meetings, it was decided that those attending all, or nearly all of the meetings, who often were the convenor or deputy convenor, would be classed as high involvement, whereas a workgroup member who regularly missed meetings would be classed as low involvement. The differentiation between high and low involvement is presented in Table 7 below.

[1] Interprofessional education, People with experience, Peer group learning, Practice based approaches to learning, Learning technologies, Higher education and healthcare challenges. Descriptions of the groups are in Chapter 4 History of CETL.

High Involvement	Low involvement
Convenor or deputy convenor	Member of a workgroup
Attends all/nearly all of the meetings	Misses meetings on regular bases

Table 7 Sampling criteria for high and low involvement participants

Qualitative interviews

A topic guide used in the interviews was drafted for the original study design. However, as the aim of the questions in the original topic guide was to encourage the participants talking about their experience in the collaboration it was left unchanged when the focus of the study changed. It was piloted with two people who were involved with CETL. Their feedback was used to improve the topic guide. The pilot interviews are not included in the data. The questions in the topic guide centred on how the individual became involved in the collaboration, what their expectations were, if they had noticed any changes in their involvement or in the collaboration as a whole as well as costs and benefits of involvement. The questions aimed to touch on the different aspects of the collaboration. In the pilot interviews the topic guide was arranged over two pages but it was difficult to keep the flow of the conversation with this lay-out and it was rearranged. The topic guide was arranged into an easy to use format on one side of an A4 paper under main headings which enabled the researcher to keep track on the areas that had been touched upon whilst enabling the conversation to flow. The questions about how the participants became involved appeared to work well as a starting question, as it helped participants to reflect back on their involvement over the collaboration. The question about the level of commitment and participants expectations on the other hand, could have been left out or phrased differently as it did not encourage participants to talk about their level of commitment. The topic guide is included in Appendix A (see p.205). The semi-structured interviews were designed to last up to an hour.

The participants were approached about participation via email sent by the researcher. The email included a letter of invitation (see Appendix B p.206) and an information sheet (see Appendix C p.207) giving more details of the study. Interested participants were asked to contact the researcher who would then arrange a date for the interview. The interviews took place in the

interviewee's place of work to minimise disruption to their work schedules. In the beginning of each interview the participants were given another opportunity to read through the information sheet again and ask any questions from the researcher before signing a consent form (see Appendix D p.209). Each interview was audio recorded with the participants' permission.

The recruitment for the interviews took place at two different points of time. A total of fourteen people were interviewed from five different workgroups. Nine of the participants were from HE organisations and five from NHS organisations. In the first wave of interviews, eight participants were interviewed. The data from the first wave of interviews was analysed before recruiting more people and conducting more interviews. After the analysis, it was decided that more interviews would add depth to the data and another six interviews were conducted. During the first round of recruitment, ten people were contacted about the project. There were eight replies, all of whom were interviewed. As the response rate to the initial invitation was so high no reminders were sent in the first round of recruitment. In the second round of recruitment, again, ten people were invited to take part, five replied straight away and were interviewed. A reminder was sent three weeks later and there were two responses to the reminder. One reply came immediately and the person was interviewed. The second reply came two months after the reminder was sent by which time the data analysis was on its way. Data analysis is an iterative process however it was decided that the late replier would not be interviewed at that point. They were thanked for their interest and it was explained that no further interviews would take place until the preliminary analysis of the second wave interview data was conducted. If there were gaps in the data and further interviews were to be conducted they would be approached again to see if they were still willing to take part.

The data from the second wave of the interviews, combined with the data from the first wave, suggested that data saturation had been reached and not enough new data would be gained from interviewing further people to justify the effort it would require to collect it. Even though there is not an established method for determining a saturation point (Francis *et al.*, 2010) the generally accepted definition is that saturation point is reached when no new data emerges to support the development of themes (Guest *et al.*, 2006). Guest *et*

al. (2006) examined 60 in-depth interviews and concluded that saturation point was reached at the first 12 interviews with elementary themes being evident after six interviews. In this study, the data saturation point, in light of the cost and benefit and the depth and width of the data that would be gained, had been reached at the end of the second round of recruitment. The saturation was evaluated by examining the categories and themes from the first wave of interviews to the second wave of interviews. There were no significant new themes arising in the second wave suggesting diminishing returns of data and possible interpretations from the first to the second wave of interviews. No participants were interviewed from the learning technologies group even though members from this group were approached about involvement and were included in both rounds of the recruitment. A decision was made not to pursue them further, as at the point of interviews the group was functioning more as a task force supporting the other groups with their technical issues, rather than a fully functioning workgroup in its own right. In hindsight, pursuing the learning technologies group could have given a different viewpoint to the experience of collaboration due to the differences in the groups' memberships and ways of working in comparison to the other workgroups. It is possible that reflecting the experiences of the learning technologies group members to others could have offered valuable insight however, at the time the decision was made this possibility was overlooked.

My position as an interviewer

The interviewer can be seen to have either predominantly an insider or outsider role in an interview setting based on how the participants identify themselves with the interviewer (Merriam *et al.*, 2001). My role as the interviewer was an outsider with some knowledge of the collaboration. Before starting the recruitment, I attended all the workgroup meetings to get acquainted with the structure of the collaboration as well as giving the members of the collaboration the opportunity to meet me. The participants knew that the studentship was funded by CETL and that I was based at Newcastle University, the lead organisation in the collaboration. This could have potentially led to the participants perceiving me to be partial and possibly biased towards Newcastle. However, as all of those interviewed were involved in education one way or

another and the academic participants would have acted as a PhD supervisors themselves, there was a level of awareness about the process of research that may not have been present with a different subject group. If anything, I as an interviewer felt slightly intimidated by interviewing some very senior staff in both HE and NHS and being only a student.

Participants appeared to accept that I had some level of 'insider' information as they tended to assume I understood key abbreviations or terms used in CETL. I also used some of the CETL language, thus demonstrating I was to a small extent an 'insider'. However as I was interested on participants' personal experiences rather than the official account and tried not to use too much CETL specific language to give the participants freedom to use the terms they preferred. On the whole the participants seemed to accept me as an outsider with a little bit of insider knowledge, for example, they assumed I knew the general structure of the collaboration but they often explained some intricacies of their workgroup to me. They knew that the findings of the study would be reported to the management of the collaboration but equally they trusted that what they shared was shared in confidence.

Analysis

The interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Thematic analysis was applied to analyse the data. The framework defined by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used to aid the process of analysis. The transcripts were coded in small sections, usually a sentence or a line. The codes were then arranged into larger categories. Once the codes were in categories, they were organised into groups of linked categories which formed the basis of the themes. Handwritten mind maps were used to help the process of forming themes out of the categories (example available in Appendix E p.210). Once the groups of categories were organised into themes, the coded text within each category was re-read in order to assure that they fitted the theme they were in. If not, they were taken out and moved to a more relevant theme. In Table 8 an example of the process of data analysis is given by presenting the extract from an interview with the code, category and theme it was then placed in. There were five themes that were formed from a total of 49 categories. The themes were the environment of collaboration, personal aspect, outcomes, points of

contact and lifecycle of the collaboration. The findings will be presented in chapters five, six and eight.

Extract	Code	Category	Theme
I want the school to properly understand the benefits of it more [Interview 1]	Knowledge of CETL	Home organisation	Point of contact
I think just mainly what I said before about being able to disseminate what you have been doing, you know the good practices and listening to what other people have been involved in as well [Interview 13]	Sharing	Practical benefits	Outcomes

Table 8 Example of data analysis process from code to theme

Documentary analysis

Sources

The aim of the documentary analysis was to build a picture of the lifecycle of the collaboration. For the documentary analysis there were multiple potential sources within the collaboration. The possible sources included the meeting minutes of the OMG, the AMG and the workgroups, any accompanying documents and the documents to HEFCE such as the bid and interim report. The minutes of both the AMG and the OMG (see Table 1, p.1 for definitions) were taken by a secretary in each meeting. Each of the workgroups were expected to take notes from the meetings. However the quality across the workgroup meeting minutes were variable, some were just quick notes jotted down after a meeting by the convenors, others rotated the role of the note taker in every meeting. Also the workgroups did not have notes taken from the very beginning of the collaboration whereas the OMG and AMG did. The AMG's focus was on advising the OMG on how best to align the operations of the collaborations with the needs of the partner organisations whereas OMG was responsible for the functioning of the collaboration. The OMG met more often than the AMG and its role was to be involved in the collaboration on a day-to-day level unlike the AMG whose role was more removed. It was decided that the OMG, rather than AMG, would offer the most comprehensive picture of the

life of the collaboration and hence were analysed. In addition to the five years of the OMG minutes, the stage two bid and the interim report to HEFCE were used as sources of reference but were not analysed to the same depth as the meeting minutes. The workgroup minutes and additional documents were also briefly considered but due to the great variability in both the quality and the content it was decided that they would not be included in the analysis, as from a small subset, it appeared that the time taken to study them would not necessarily be justified in terms of useable data that would be gained.

There were a total of 46 meetings over the five years as shown in Table 9. The total length of the minutes was 230 pages, the length of individual meeting minutes were usually around four to eight pages. The minutes were taken by a CETL secretary, the finished minutes were sent to the CETL director to be checked before being presented in the next meeting for the approval of the group. Over the five year duration, the minutes were taken by seven different secretaries. Two secretaries permanently employed by Newcastle University provided cover for the first year before the CETL secretary's post was filled as the OMG wanted to wait until the manager was in post before making the appointment, as the manager and the secretary would work closely together. There were three CETL secretaries over the remaining four years and two temporary secretaries, from a temping agency, whilst the permanent secretaries were being replaced.

Year	Period	Meetings held	Meetings cancelled
Year 1	Apr 2005 - March 2006	12	
Year 2	Apr 2006 – March 2007	8	1
0Year 3	Apr 2007- March 2008	9	
Year 4	Apr 2008 – March 2009	8	1
Year 5	Apr 2009 – March 2010	9	

Table 9 Number of meetings per year for the duration of CETL

Analysis

The meeting minutes were analysed thematically (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The repeat items, such as attendance list, apologies, and future meeting dates were omitted from the analysis. The accompanying documents were looked at, especially if the discussion in the meeting focused on them, but they were not analysed, rather just used as reference points if needed. The main

focus of the analysis was the actual minutes themselves. The minutes were coded item by item unless the item considered consisted of more than one topic within it. There were two temporary secretaries who had not formatted minutes but used longer paragraphs of text; these were broken into smaller sections, a similar size to items in other minutes, consisting of a few sentences and then coded. In documentary analysis, as in any other textual analysis, the unit of analysis can be any length as the same unit is applied in each document (Scott, 1990). As with analysis of the interviews, the codes were arranged into larger categories which then were linked into themes. An example of the analysis process is given in Table 10 on the next page. The table includes an extract from the meeting minutes, the category it was coded under and the theme that it became part of. As with the analysis of the interviews, mind maps were utilised to help this process of forming themes from the categories. There were a total of 600 coded items which were collated into 26 categories. Out of these categories four themes were formed. The themes, which will be presented in detail in chapters seven and eight, were lifecycle of a collaboration, day-to-day running, context of the collaboration and the make-up of the collaboration.

Minute item	Code	Category	Theme
Funding arrangements between the Partners (Fellows and Associates) were clarified. Partners would like a break down of how much each workgroup has spent of its budgeted amount for the past financial year and what they have left to spend. Partners would like (if possible) to look at the budgeting at the next meeting. [10.10.2007]	Spending	Practicalities	Day to day running
What each group intends to take forward after the 2010 should be addressed at the next OMG as the intention is that CETL will have an ongoing life. [10.12.2008]	Planning	Future	Lifecycle of collaboration

Table 10 Example of the process of moving from codes to themes

Chapter 4. The history and development of CETL

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to build a picture of CETL, where it came from and how it developed. In comparison to the other findings chapters it is rather short, however the role of the chapter is to act as the setting of the scene for the following findings chapters. It is almost like a libretto for an opera, it gives extra details and tells the story. The opera would be enjoyable without the libretto but being able to read the description highlights extra nuances and adds depth to the experience.

The first part of the chapter is an overview of CETL. The origins of its funding has already been given in the Introduction Chapter so they will not be repeated again (see section Context p.8). The focus here is on how CETL was transformed from an idea on a paper to a functioning collaboration. There are also some examples of the projects that were part of the CETL to give an idea of what the collaboration did on a practical level. The second part of the chapter focuses on the timeline of the collaboration, highlighting events nationally and regionally that had an impact on CETL. It also maps the key points in the life of the collaboration capturing the development of the collaboration and the context in which it was taking place. The references for this chapter were the stage two bid to HEFCE and informal discussions with the directorate of CETL. As mentioned previously, the aim of this project is to discover more about the way collaborations work in a higher education setting and demystify the process of collaboration. Before charging ahead on this mission, it is important to focus on the collaboration in question.

The study setting - overview of CETL

The aims of the collaboration

The CETL started its life as a Centre for Excellence in Healthcare Professional Education. As the collaboration started to take shape, it was decided to use the title CETL4HealthNE. Those involved at the time felt that it was both more inclusive and more recognisable. The aim of the collaboration was fostering curriculum development for employability in the modernised health care service. The aim was reflected in the selection of the academic

collaborative partners: the University of Durham, Newcastle University, Northumbria University, the University of Sunderland and Teesside University with local NHS partners: the two strategic health authorities (SHA) in the region, (Northumberland, Tyne and Wear SHA and County Durham and Teesside SHA, they joined in 2006 to form the North East SHA), North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Trust, North Tyneside Primary Care Trust and Northumberland Healthcare NHS trust. Newcastle University was the lead institution on the bid and the CETL office was later located there.

The aims of the CETL could be summarised as a regional response to *The NHS Plan* published in 2000 that predicted a challenging future for the NHS in terms of adapting to forthcoming changes (Department of Health, 2000). According to the stage two bid, CETL as a collaboration, wanted to address issues surrounding the education of the future workforce for the NHS and ensure the future workforce were prepared for the challenge given to them. The heart of the CETL was to enable change in the curriculum in order to educate future health professionals who would be prepared for the demands of the modernised NHS. One of the emphases was on preparing students for patient-centred care and the increased involvement of patients in the choices and decisions made about their own care.

Involvement of both the education and service partners was seen as one of the strengths of the collaboration, ensuring education was changing in line with the needs of service provision. The vision of CETL, as stated in the bid, was to enable continuous generation, implementation, embedding and evaluation of innovation and change in education through the developing partnership. The range of disciplines that were to benefit from the CETL included dentistry, medicine, midwifery, nursing, occupational therapy, pharmacology, physiotherapy and radiography. In the bid, it was made it clear that those involved wanted to see the outcomes of the collaboration in terms of the impact on students, namely employability and fitness for purpose reflecting the directions given in *The NHS Plan* (Department of Health, 2000).

Vision transformed into practice

The vision practically transformed into a complex collaborative structure which consisted of six workgroups, two management groups (operational and

advisory), a CETL office including a manager and a secretary, and the directorate (consisting of a director, a deputy director and the manager). Each partner signed a partnership agreement to formalise the arrangements of the collaboration as requested by HEFCE. The collaboration grew around a group of people from each of the partner organisations, individuals who had been named and identified in the bid to HEFCE. They helped to get the workgroups set up once the funding was received. There were six proposed workgroups: Interprofessional Education (IPE), People with Experience (PwE), Peer Group Learning (PGL), Practice Based Approaches to Learning (PBAL), Health of the Population and Preparation for Modernised Health Care.

Early on in the life of the collaboration, a Teaching Public Health Network was established across the region by the Department of Health as one of their nine regional Teaching Public Health Networks. It was decided that duplicating the efforts was unnecessary and the Health of the Population workgroup ceased to exist separately. Likewise the Preparation for Modernised Health Care group struggled to find their focus and decided to broaden the scope of the group and became Healthcare and Higher Education Challenges group (HHEC). This change in focus enabled the group to look at issues facing both the health service and education. Later on another group emerged from the technical demands of the collaboration, the Learning Technologies group. This group was formed by individuals who had been helping with the capital spend and assessing which technologies to buy. After their involvement in getting the equipment in place, they felt they had a role to play in helping others with the use of technology in education. Overall the number of the workgroups remained the same as in the bid even though there were changes. Each group is presented in detail in Table 11.

Name	Aim	Projects
Interprofessional Education (IPE)	To prepare students for a work environment where there is increased integration between professions in the provision and delivery of care	IPL Roadshow workshop - Developing skills for facilitating interprofessional learning in practice setting
		The Safer Healthcare Interprofessional Focused Training (SHIFT) project to promote patient safety
People with Experience (PwE)	To focus on increasing the involvement of patients and carers, the people with experience, in all aspects of curriculum development, delivery and assessment	Narrative archive
		Sensory DVD to promote understanding of living with sensory impairment
Peer Group Learning (PGL)	To investigate how PGL is best utilised in health care education and encouraging students to develop skills that would help them to utilise communities of learning both on campus and in practice	The Buddy Project
		Scoping exercise of PGL within the organisations
		Using laptops in group learning situations
Practice Based Approaches to Learning (PBAL)	To identify learning that can only take place in practice and ways to enable this learning to take place, identifying the barriers and how to overcome them to benefit students, staff and ultimately patients	Dr Companion – handheld devices (PDAs)
		Hard Days night
		Portable ultrasound equipment
Health Care and Higher Education Challenges (HHEC)	To keep an eye on the future developments affecting the key challenges and policy changes affecting health care and higher education and then feed these issues to the other workgroups to enable them to understand better the wider context in which their work was taking place	The group did not run projects themselves but were advising other groups on challenges and policy changes
Learning Technologies Group	To create a forum to share good practice amongst the technical teams in HE and NHS. The group wanted to encourage the use of technology and help organisations through advice, support and even trialling technologies before they were piloted or launched	ReCap lecture capture system
		Videoconferencing
		Providing support

Table 11 The workgroups, their aims and main projects

CETL Fellows

The CETL fellows formed the spine for the activity of the collaboration. Originally in the Stage 2 bid the intention was to have HE and NHS fellows but to only reimburse HE fellows. Once the collaboration commenced it was decided that the input of NHS institutions should be equally recognised and through reallocation of funds the money was made available to do this. The HE institutions were recompensed at the rate of 0.15FTE per fellow, a total annual funding of £10770 per fellow. The NHS organisations were recompensed at the same rate. A further £1000 per fellow was available for discretionary personal use, such as conference fees or small equipment. Each institution was given the freedom to use these funds as they saw appropriate. The way partners used it varied across the institutions; some partners used the money to buy out teaching hours, others used it towards staff development and one partner employed a support staff person to work on related projects. There was funding for 15.5 HE (FTE) fellows and 5 NHS fellows (FTE).

Criteria for a fellowship were drawn up. In the process, existing fellowship criteria the partner institutions had were reviewed. The expectation was that the fellows would be “perceived as beacons for excellence in teaching and learning in their home institutions” (p.23, CETL4HealthNE, 2004). Representatives of the institutions selected individuals to be put forwards for the fellowship based on the criteria provided and the directorate approved the choice. Some of the potential fellows were named in the Stage 1 bid. Once the funding was confirmed each organisation was asked to put a name forward of a fellow who would have the strategic management role and once the priorities of the collaboration were clearer other fellows were selected. The fellows were appointed with the expressed purpose of helping the collaboration to meet its aims. The fellows were accountable to the OMG on any activity they undertook in the name of CETL. The fellows often held leadership positions in their own organisations. The convenors of the workgroups were all fellows even though it was not a requirement for becoming a convenor.

Examples of CETL projects

To build a better picture of what the workgroups did, here are three brief examples of the projects that took place within CETL. They have been selected

as they each link into the aims of the CETL directly and can be seen in their own way to answer the challenge of developing health care professionals prepared for the needs of the modernised NHS as expressed in *The NHS Plan* (Department of Health, 2000). The projects are presented in detail in Table 12 below.

Project	History	Description	Student benefit
Narrative Archive	Project of the PWE workgroup started at Northumbria University and carried on further by the group	Collecting patients' narratives of their condition and experience of illness	Students able to hear local stories of experience in the health care service from the service users themselves
Hard Day's Night	Started in the North Tees and Hartlepool NHS trust but expanded by the PBAL group	Workshop simulating ward situations involving nurses, medical and pharmacy students	Development of interprofessional interaction through communication and team work and learning to prioritise under pressure
Buddy Pilot	Created and organised by the PGL group	Exploring ways in which the second year students can provide support and aid the learning of the first year students who were on their first community placement	Providing learning opportunities to students on community placements that would naturally occur on wards

Table 12 Descriptions of sample projects undertaken by the workgroups

As stated above, each of the projects answer a specific driver on the agenda for the modernised healthcare. The drivers or agendas that the projects listed in Table 12 can be seen to address are patient centred care, interprofessional working and care in community. Patient-centred care and the involvement of patients in decisions about their care on a more equal footing than ever before was very explicit in the NHS Plan. The Narrative Archive (2009) aimed to help students to understand the condition and care from the patients' perspective. Interprofessional working is seen as a central part of the working life of health care professionals. The Hard Day's Night project aimed to create realistic ward-based situations where the health professionals would come into contact with each other naturally on the wards and encourage the students to think of the situations holistically rather than from the singular

viewpoint of their own profession. The Buddy Project can be seen to start developing an answer to the challenges posed by providing care in a community setting. On the wards, equipment is at hand as is other staff, whereas in the community a health care professional is relatively isolated. The Buddy Project aimed to encourage students to think of ways they could learn and be in contact with other professionals when out in the community. It gave the students the readiness to be more comfortable in a community setting once qualified.

Timeline

It is difficult, almost artificial, to try to tie collaboration down to a timeline due to the on-going nature of the relationships and networks that precede and continue after the formal collaboration period. But the collaboration does not float in a timeless vacuum either. Therefore it is helpful to anchor the collaboration to time and space in order to give reference points to people external to the collaboration. In the case of CETL, it was the five years of HEFCE funding running from early 2005 to early 2010. The timelines of the collaboration, as presented in Figure 1 and Figure 2, aim to present major events and turning points that happened during the collaboration. The events presented on the timelines either have a significant impact for the collaboration as a whole or for individual members. The timelines also offer a view of events in the wider setting outside the collaboration which could be seen to potentially have an impact on the collaboration. The timeline is more of a reference for the reader on events that happened rather than a point for discussion. The timelines give a broad outline of events not a detailed account of everything that happened during the collaboration. The majority of the events on the timelines are recorded in the OMG minutes. There were distinct beginning and end points of the collaboration defined by the receiving of the HEFCE funding and the funding finishing. However collaboration happened before and after both of these points. The focus of this thesis is on the five years as defined by the period of HEFCE funding for CETL4healthNE. The decision to focus on the five HEFCE funded years was made because the study needed a defined time period to frame it. Choosing the beginning of the funding as a starting point was based on there being no documentary data available before this point. The end

of HEFCE funding was thought to be a good point to finish after the end of HEFCE funding the collaboration changed the model of how it operated and in essence became a different collaboration. The consequences of choosing the timeframe defined by HEFCE will be examined in the discussion chapter.

In Figure 1 below the timeline for events within CETL are described. The journey of the CETL that is described in the thesis, started with the announcement of the successful bids for the funding in January 2005 by HEFCE. However ,that is not the entire existence of CETL. It existed as an idea before the funding was secured and continued beyond the end of the funding. The funding announcement was followed by a burst of activity in the CETL. A shadow management group was formed to oversee the collaboration until the formal management groups were established and a manager was in post. The shadow management group organised an away-day, which for most people was where their involvement in the collaboration started. There was a refocusing and shifting that took place over the life of the collaboration. Workgroups were defined before the start; however the OMG expected they might need adjusting as time went on. The main shift and refocus points are highlighted in the timeline. For the collaboration as a whole, the CETL manager taking up their post and the capital expenditure coming to an end, were significant events. At the level of the workgroups, the production of the business plans was one of the most significant points for them.

The second timeline, presented in Figure 2, focuses on the national and regional developments that took place in the lifetime of the CETL. At the regional level, one of the most significant events was the merging of the two regional Strategic Health Authorities. At a national level the publication of the Darzi review *High quality care for all: NHS Next Stage Review final report* (Darzi, 2008) had the most impact on CETL. The timeline is not an exhaustive list of the policy documents or changes that happened but a representation of the turning points that were presented in the OMG minutes.

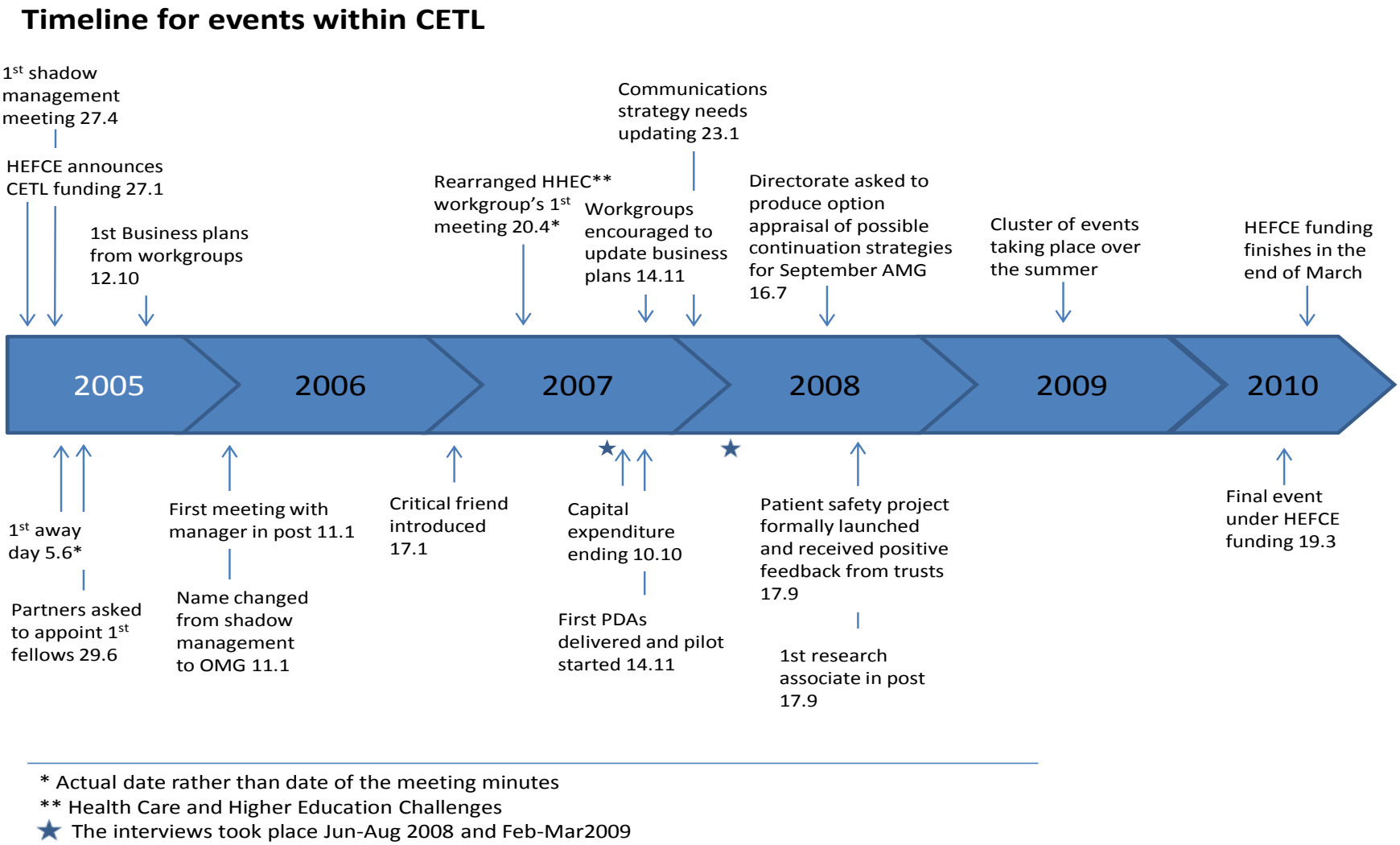


Figure 1 Presenting the timeline of events that took place in the CETL during the five years of its HEFCE funded existence

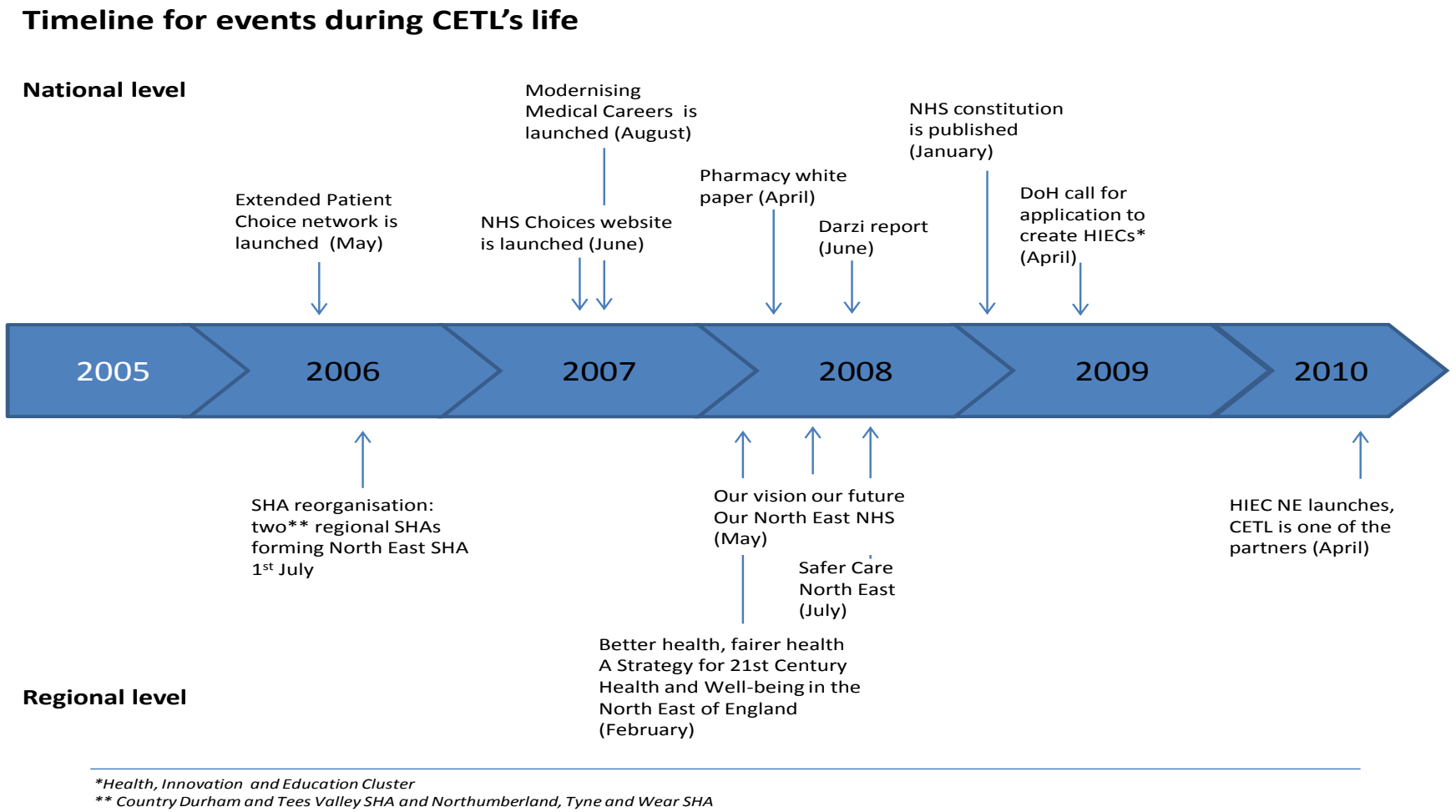


Figure 2 Timeline of events, including publications of policy documents, taking place nationally and regionally during CETLs HEFCE funded existence

Introduction to findings

The findings of this thesis are divided into four chapters. The first chapter focuses on the experience of the individual members in the collaboration. The other chapters explore the context of the collaboration, collaboration as seen through the meeting minutes and the lifecycle of collaboration. The first two chapters detail the experience of involvement through members' perceptions on the process and outcomes of the collaboration, thus answering the questions raised by the first research question of this study. The second research question, which explored the changes in the collaborative experiences and in the collaboration itself, is covered in the last two findings chapters (chapters seven and eight) where the development of collaboration is examined. The data presented in the first two chapters is from the interviews. The data in the third chapter is from the documentary analysis and in the fourth chapter the data from these two different sources are combined to build a more complete picture of the evolution of the collaboration. Below in Table 13 the main focus of each chapter is given. The table also presents the areas of overlap between the findings chapters. The aim has been to keep overlap to a minimum but for some of the topics, there were different aspects of the same issue which made it more fitting to be presented in its own chapter, hence the overlap was unavoidable.

Chapter	Chapter 5. Participant experience – small piece in a big picture	Chapter 6. Context of the collaboration	Chapter 7. Collaboration through meeting minutes	Chapter 8. Lifecycle of the collaboration
Source	Interviews	Interviews	Meeting minutes	Interviews and meeting minutes
Focus	The individuals' experience in CETL	Setting that surrounded the individuals experience	How the collaboration is presented through the meeting minutes	The development and evolution of the collaboration
Main points	How participants got involved and what their expectations were	Organisational challenges including HE-NHS and size	Day to day running	The formation phase
	Challenges to involvement	Participants engagement in the work group	Context	The mobilisation phase
	Encouragers of involvement			The revision phase
	Interface between individual and their home organisation	Outcomes of the collaboration as part of the context	Make up of the collaboration	The evolutionary cycle of collaboration
Overlap	Getting involved in a workgroup follows similar pattern to getting involved in a collaboration, the processes are almost synonymous		Development of focus and identity	
	Some of the outcomes of the collaboration were perceived as encouragers of involvement by participants			
		Context of the collaboration particularly organisational challenges and workgroup		

Table 13 Defining the main points of the findings chapters and highlighting overlaps between the chapters

Chapter 5. Small piece in the big puzzle: journey of becoming involved

Introduction

The experience of involvement in the collaboration is explored in this chapter through four different areas. Each will be examined in detail below to build a picture of the experience of involvement in a large scale collaboration as perceived by the members. The first section focuses on how participants became involved, how they found their role in the collaboration and what their expectations were. The next section is about the pressure points, highlighting the areas that participants struggled with in their involvement. This is followed by what encouraged the participants to stay involved. In the final section of the chapter, the emphasis is on the interface between the home organisation and the collaboration and how these dynamics influence the members' experience of involvement.

A fitting metaphor for the members' experiences of the collaboration is going on a train journey. The passengers on the same train come from different places, the direction of their journey is shared but their destinations are different. The passengers board and alight the train at different stations. Likewise in CETL, people who formed the collaboration had different backgrounds, expectations and experiences. People became involved at different times and also left at different times. There was no definite start point for the collaboration, neither was there a definite end point. The collaborative experience was like sharing a journey with fellow passengers with each bringing their own luggage of unique experiences and skills with them.

The beginning of the journey

The beginning of the journey describes the participants' experiences of getting involved in the CETL. Most participants became involved in the collaboration because their interests overlapped with the CETL aims. Another shared feature in becoming involved was being asked by a line manager or senior colleague to join CETL which highlights the relational nature of collaborations. The CETL aims also influenced the expectations participants

had of the collaboration as many felt it would be wrong to expect things outside the parameters of the collaborative aims.

Getting involved

The experience of getting involved followed similar paths for most of the participants. Their interest in a specific area highlighted them as a potential participant to their line managers or colleagues. However there were two differing reactions to this. The first reaction was a very matter of fact acceptance of 'I have been asked to do this, therefore I shall do it' without really pondering why they had been approached. The whole process of being asked to be part of the collaboration came across almost as a very mundane, commonplace transaction.

> *[line manager] asked us to get involved with it, she explained to us that she was a fellow and she wanted us to get involved in…one of the groups [Interview 4, NHS, L197-198]*

The second reaction was a more reflective and contemplative stance. Rather than accepting the request at face value, the participants reasoned their interests linking to the aims of the collaboration and specific objectives of their workgroup to be behind the request. A similar notion was highlighted by Buse and Harmer (2007) who noted the importance of individuals' interests aligning with those of the collaboration in order to create effective collaborations. However, there was a noticeable difference between the HE and NHS participants. The NHS participants more readily accepted their line managers' reasoning without connecting their interests to the request, whereas the HE participants linked the request for involvement with their interests, which they knew were well known by their colleagues.

> *My interests were known to people and so I was really very pleased to be included [Interview 10, HE, L36-37]*

A participants' job role in their home organisation was often mentioned in their narrative of becoming involved. There was a shared sense of being the obvious person, because of their interest, but also because of the intersection between the role in collaboration and their daily duties within their organisation. For

example the person with responsibility of increasing service user involvement would become involved in the people with experience workgroup. The view that resonated with the participants was that the involvement fitted ‘nicely’ with their role. This seemed to suggest that the managers, or colleagues, considered carefully who to put forward in order to ensure that the existing expertise in organisations was utilised, without adding too much extra pressure to people’s workloads. However it needs to be remembered that the suggestion is only based on participants perceptions of their role fitting well, rather than managers and team leaders account on how they chose participants.

> *So I think I was identified, [line manager] had been involved and I think I was identified as the next person who would have the most overlap if you like with my remit and the CETL aims so that was formally where it came from and obviously I was interested in it myself [Interview 11, NHS, L20-23]*

The idea of involvement fitting nicely, or being the obvious person is quite encouraging but it does also raise the question of what would happen if there were no obvious people to involve? A possible reason for this to happen could be that the focus of the collaboration is not right for the partner organisation and therefore finding suitable people to engage in the collaboration is a struggle. Hypothetically this could lead to the partner organisation becoming disengaged due to lack of representation, or the partner organisation sending in a representative with no interest in the topic of the collaboration and struggling with the involvement as there was no relevance to their daily job role.

As said, the alignment of professional and personal interests with the CETL was a shared reason for becoming involved. It was the same whether the participant had been involved since the early discussions or had joined at a later stage replacing another member who had left. Partner organisations wanted to ensure continuity in their involvement by finding replacement members as swiftly as possible for those who had moved on. Selecting a replacement within organisations followed the same framework as was used to find the starting members attending the first away day (see Timeline section p.74 and Choosing a workgroup p.112) – finding a person whose interests were aligned to the CETL agenda. There was a very practical side to this; on one hand there was a position to be covered, on the other hand there was a person with interest in the

area, so asking them to become involved was the logical response to the situation regardless of the stage the collaboration was at.

> *So, of course when [name] left this school, the dean offered the fellowship to me because I was already heavily involved in the area [Interview 6, HE, L29-31]*

For some of the participants there was also an added enticement of previous working relationships with other members, outside their own organisation, who were already involved in the collaboration. These connections encouraged the participants to seek engagement with the CETL. Firstly, they often heard about CETL through the people they knew. Secondly, they saw CETL as a way of continuing the fruitful working relationship they had in the past and actively sought engagement. Whether people had previous relationships with each other or not was not a question included in the topic guide. However some participants volunteered the information thus highlighting the importance of these connections. Gergen's (2001) concept of organisations as a relational nuclei which give both strength and accountability was evident in CETL as the previous relationships participants brought with them to the new collaboration gave the new group stronger foundations. Previous working relationships encouraged participants to seek ways to continue them.

> *I got into CETL because historically, I have been working with a group of people on a project so I had a very productive history with them through the project [name] so I got into, I fell into a job there, but as I say, slightly actively and it was such a productive and positive group really [Interview 7, HE, L23-24;33-35]*

Expectations

Building on the metaphor of the train journey, passengers usually have some expectation of the time the journey is going to take, the scenery on the way and their final destination. They may have never visited the final destination, but based on what others have told them or they themselves have read, the passenger has constructed an image of what it will be like. Very occasionally you get an adventurous traveller who does not know the destination but they are going along for the ride out of curiosity or because they do not want to miss out on what others are doing. For the participants, the aims of the CETL were the destination they were heading towards.

The expectations the participants had in the CETL were linked to what they believed their organisation would get out of the involvement as well as the aims of the collaboration. They had a rough idea of the destination based on the aims given in the CETL bid. There was a very practical reasoning that participants shared; they believed it would be wrong to expect things that were not within the aims of the collaboration. Continuing with the analogy of the train journey, if the train timetable only lists the main stations along the route, then the passengers do not expect to stop at smaller stations in between, even if it would be more convenient for them. Personally the participants might like to see certain things happen, but if the collaboration was not aiming to achieve them then they felt it was wrong to expect them to happen. Previous research has found that having clear expectations of the aims and goals helps to create effective collaboration (El Ansari and Phillips, 2001a; Munro and Russell, 2007). The findings from this research suggest that individuals align their expectations to the aims of the collaboration, therefore if the collaboration has defined their aims clearly the participants' expectations will be equally clear.

> *I think the expectations have to be linked to expressed goals really, so I didn't have any additional personal expectations, because I think that would be unrealistic. [Interview 12, HE, L39-41]*

Participants also felt that there was a bit of an enigma about the collaboration. They knew the overall destination, as described in the aims, but were unsure of the route that they would jointly, as a collective entity, take to get there. There were general expectations. Yet participants' expectations, per se, were not fixed. Participants allowed their personal expectations to change and grow as the collaboration started to form and take shape. What CETL was aiming to do was visible, but the practical steps of getting there were unclear, hence the participants were uncertain about what to expect.

> *I suppose it's fair to say, at the outset I wasn't really clear on what we would, you know, what practically would we be getting out of it [Interview 11, NHS, L46-48]*

However, this is not to say participants did not have expectations but rather they modified their expectations to align with the aims of the

collaboration. On the whole there was a sense of realism that was reflected by the participants. There were no unrealistic expectations, let alone utopian dreams, of what CETL could achieve. There was a shared sense of hopeful but pragmatic optimism. The participants had been involved in numerous initiatives before - some successful, some not. They understood the potential CETL had, but they also were reined in by their previous experiences. Despite the lack of fixed expectations, participants believed that CETL could help to move different agendas forwards by shifting perceptions within organisations and between organisations.

> *I didn't come with very fossilised expectations, and I think [my expectations] were just to connect up what I was doing across the universities in a more coherent way [Interview 10, HE, L59-61]*

The viewpoint the participants shared about not having personal expectations outside those defined by the collaboration begs the question whether the participants were limiting their expectations or were letting the expectations limit themselves. Collaboration needs a focus that aims and objectives give but what if the collaboration is limiting itself by the aims it has set. However, even though the participants did not express expectations on a personal level as such, they still had an agenda they wanted to achieve through CETL. There were two identifiable agendas in the participants' narratives. The first one was, wanting to improve the students' learning experience. Participants felt that CETL had potential to help bring improvements for their students. CETL would enable them to be better educators through getting access to a range of different experiences for the students and helping them to connect with other educators. Even though this agenda does not have a directly personal focus, it is much closer to the individual. The participants were involved because they wanted their students to benefit.

> *My aims were really about raising the profile of our programme, trying to broaden the education of our students [Interview 7, HE, 263-264]*

The second narrative, which was less prominent, was about engaging their own profession with other health and social care professions. Again, it was not a self-centred agenda, as the aim was to bring professions closer together

and have a better understanding between each other. However it has a personal side to it as the narrators were members of these professional groups and creating better links would improve their working experience amongst other health professions. These participants wanted to engage in the collaboration to bridge the gap between their profession and others.

> *I think it is important for [my profession] to move away from the isolation and come more into healthcare…so CETL suits us from that angle it's that we can really start, can really make links… liaise with other health care, undergraduate healthcare professionals [Interview 1, HE, L31-35]*

Finding your role

Once the participants had joined the collaboration, they had to find the place where they fitted in, their own little niche. They had decided to join the collaboration and next they wanted to find a way of contributing and being involved. Participants' experiences of finding a role varied. A narrative shared by the convenors was one of almost accidentally finding themselves as convenors. They were not actively looking to become convenors but 'ended up' in the role, either because others saw leadership potential in them or they were perceived to have the most knowledge within the subject area.

> *When we first started at, I became, I can't remember how it happened now, but I think I became by default, I became a convenor of the [workgroup] I can't remember if I volunteered or if I was sat in the wrong place. [Interview 11, NHS, L50-53]*

For others finding their place was a journey of discovery. This was almost synonymous with the process of the evolution of the collaboration and the whole entity finding its identity, as described in chapter eight (see Identity and focus p.154 and Collaboration as evolutionary cycle p.171). The lack of structure in the early days made it more challenging for the participants to feel settled. The line between whether they were being a representative of their organisation or just attending meetings to feed information back was blurry. Some of the uncertainty participants felt could be explained in terms of the social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). As the collaborative developed the participants starting increasingly to identify themselves with the

collaboration. In the beginning of the collaboration, it would have been viewed as an out-group. Even though the participants were members of the collaboration they still most closely identified with their own home organisation. However as the collaboration started to form its own identity it also started to increasingly become the in-group. Reflecting this, once the collaboration started to take shape, the participants felt it was easier to see their own role within the larger entity. Once participants had a grasp of what the collaboration was then they could see where they fitted in.

> *I think it was mainly at first it was just to get a hang a hold of really what it was about and what my involvement would be […] I don't think I really actually knew what my role was at that point, in the very beginning. [Interview 13, NHS, L33-34;53-54]*

Participants' home organisations were also reflected in their process of finding a place in the collaboration. Most partner organisations had multiple people taking part in the collaboration. Hence, some of the partner organisations made a conscious effort to spread their representation as widely as possible across the workgroups. These organisations adopted a strategy to encourage wider engagement. Additionally, the participants' role in their own organisations reflected onto the role they took on in the collaboration. As mentioned above, the workgroup participants got involved in was linked to part of their role in their home organisation, furthermore it also had an impact on the role they took within the group. This was especially the case for participants with managerial responsibility in their own organisation, who felt part of their role in the collaboration was to encourage others, particularly from their own organisation, to participate. Part of their own engagement with the collaboration was enabling others to be involved.

> *I don't feel like I'm really doing a lot and I've had to reassure myself that actually that's not my role it's my role to enable the fellows to do a lot [Interview 12, HE, L63-65]*

Pressure points in involvement

This section focuses on the challenges participants experienced when involved in the collaboration. The subsections discussing the challenges are

balancing act and time pressure. Through focusing on the balancing act participants perceived themselves undertaking challenges. The term pressure points is used to describe the challenges. Time pressure was a major challenge to participants and the experience of involvement was a tension between wanting to be more involved and not having sufficient time to do so.

Balancing act

When participants spoke of their experience of being involved, words like tension, balance and struggle were used. It was not a narrative of easy-going happiness but one of choosing to be involved and being willing to bear the cost. This reflects findings of previous research on collaboration where participants struggled with lack of time but the value they saw from the collaboration encouraged them to overcome it (Montiel-Overall, 2008). As described earlier there was an overlap between the participant's role in the organisation and in the CETL. However, the overlap did not take away the increase in workload and participants shared a sense of the collaboration being additional to their daily role.

> *I suppose it is like [a] balancing act because you do put a lot of work in and in some ways you do it on top of your day job [Interview 2, HE, L67-69]*

Part of the tension participants felt, was caused by their wish to do more but physically not having the time or the resources to do so. There was a disparity between their desire and the reality of their input. The participants perceived the potential of the collaboration and how they could contribute towards it. They could see what needed to be done, but physically did not have the capacity to do so themselves. A fitting example was a convenor who wanted to take things forwards but often the best they felt they could do was to write the minutes up from the previous meeting. The desire to input more and the demands of their daily roles contradicted each other. Participants had the will, but felt that their workload was a hindrance to committing as much time as they would have liked.

> *I have a teaching role, I'm an active researcher, I lead on this, on involvement in my own school plus across the CETL and I have found it extremely difficult to have real quality time on the CETL agenda [Interview 10, HE, L198-200]*

It could be argued that if the participants really wanted to do more in the collaboration they would find a way of doing so. However comparing the demands of the day job and the requirements of CETL was difficult, if not impossible. Participants themselves wanted to input more and they felt a sense of expectation for more involvement from the collaboration. However they had to go through an internal process of prioritising demands to decide which needed more urgent attention in each situation. Often the day job, being at hand, had the advantage over the collaboration, which was more arbitrary and removed.

> *Reasonably there is an expectation that you are going to deliver something and that's quite difficult when you know you've got to stack it up against the other priorities you are dealing with so it has felt quite stressful being involved [Interview 11, NHS, L227-230]*

Participants felt it was challenging choosing between the demands and priorities of collaboration and their day job. The decision of whether to attend a workgroup meeting or deal with an urgent issue that needed immediate attention at the home organisation was easier to make if the participants knew they had the support of both the senior staff in their own organisation as well as their colleagues in the collaboration. Previous research has suggested that the perceived support for the collaboration by senior managers helps to create a collaborative culture in the organisation (Kezar, 2006). The findings of this research highlight a different angle to this through suggesting that participants need to feel the sense of approval for the decisions they make, both from their own senior staff and those in the collaboration. The tension of not wanting to let their collaborative colleagues down nor wanting to leave issues unaddressed at work was eased if the participants felt that others understood why they had made the choice they had.

> *I think one of the hard things is if something comes up and I think actually I have to stay and respond to this I can't go to that CETL meeting and once or twice I've been you know, I've had me coat on to set off to go to the management group and something's come up and I've had to say actually I have to stay and deal with this and you need support to make that decision as*

well because you do feel that you are not fulfilling your commitment and you are letting people down [Interview 12, HE, L558-564]

However the findings are based on interviews around the midpoint in the life of the collaboration and are therefore projecting forwards assuming the tension will continue on a similar scale as the collaboration advances. It is possible however that if the participants had been interviewed later on in the life of the collaboration they would have had a differing perception of the balancing act and the tensions they felt. It could be possible that as the collaborative participants grow more familiar with their role in the collaboration they would feel the tension between their work role and collaborative involvement decreasing.

Time pressure

Participants felt pressured for time. Finding time to undertake CETL activities in addition to attending workgroup meetings was difficult. The partner organisations were given backfill money to enable the fellows to be freed up for CETL-related activities. The participants in management roles shared some of their efforts to release staff time, for example by identifying teaching time that could be bought out. However participants' experience was that the availability of the backfill money was not being translated into visible reductions in their workload. Timetabling issues within HE added to the difficulty of finding time to dedicate to the collaboration. Again, the narrative was one of wanting to do more but not being able to do so. Participants felt that they struggled to put time aside for CETL.

I mean I'm suppose to be protected one day a week from my time but I can't see that happening, I mean that will happen over the summer but in term time it's just almost an impossibility [Interview 1, HE, L248-250]

Travelling added to the time pressure participants felt. Taking time out for meetings meant not only blocking out the time the meetings lasted but also the time it took to get there. Participants recognised that it was impossible to find meeting locations that were an equal distance of travel for all participants when the collaboration covered such a large area. Participants from the southern part of the region felt that they had to travel further than others. However travelling

was not as great an issue as workload, it was more a nuisance that they endured. Though on a practical level, it meant adding travel time to the meeting time which in some cases doubled the time participants needed to take out of their day.

> *Also the distances involved in travelling to the most sites so for me to travel to meeting in the northern part of the CETL area during the day that takes another two hours travelling time there and back in addition to the time spent in the meeting itself [Interview 3, HE, L42-45]*

What encouraged involvement

The balancing act which participants described in relation to their involvement had both the pressured side, as described above, and the encouraging side which is described here. Participants felt the hard work was worth the effort because of what they were getting in exchange for their efforts. The relationships they made, the learning experience they went through, exchanging ideas with other likeminded individuals; all these made the involvement worthwhile for the members. In the following section the key experiences that sustained participants' involvement are explained in more detail.

Learning experience

One of the main factors that participants identified as making CETL enjoyable was the learning experience the collaboration provided for them. There were repeated narratives on how much they had learnt individually or as an organisation. On a very practical level the learning experience for individuals was gaining more knowledge about the different partner organisations and how they operated. Increased interaction improved understanding of each others' habits and priorities. They became familiar with the way other organisations worked and the language they used.

> *I mean you always learn, don't you, I've still learnt more about how universities and you know HE people and service people work and the language and the differences and that so you carry on learning those things, don't you, so I think that's been good [Interview 11, NHS, L347-351]*

Participants felt their knowledge had been broadened through learning from each other and finding out what others did. The aim of CETL was to bring change into the curriculum for a modernised workforce. Yet, the learning that the participants experienced would suggest that CETL also enabled interprofessional learning to take place as the participants described themselves learning with, from and about each other, the essential attributes in the definition of IPE by the Centre for Advancement of Interprofessional Education (CAIPE, 2002). Without being overtly interprofessional in its focus (with the exception of IPE workgroup) CETL did give the participants opportunities for interprofessional learning through their involvement. CETL enabled informal interprofessional learning, where IPE occurs as part of other planned action as opposed to formal interprofessional learning where IPE is explicitly planned for (Freeth *et al.*, 2005). Being involved in different initiatives through the collaboration increased the participants' knowledge and experience. Participants spoke of their involvement as a constant learning experience. These findings align themselves with previous research that has found that participants appreciated the knowledge transfer and the exchange of ideas that can take place in a collaborative setting (Stein and Short, 2001; Jansson *et al.*, 2010). Some of the learning was easily articulated whereas other parts were more a process of on-going internalisation rather than an instant 'aha' moment. The learning participants experienced was essentially relational. Through getting to know each other more, they also became more aware of what others were doing. This was not only on the individual or organisational level but on a level of disciplines too.

> *So the kind of broadening of knowledge about, not just health professional education, but medical education, it's been quite enlightening [Interview 2, HE, L245-247]*

There was also some very individualistic learning that took place. The collaboration offered an opportunity of self discovery which looked very different for all the participants. One participant felt that being involved in the CETL had taught them how to cope with the unstructured nature of emerging groups and initiatives. Another participant felt that CETL had taught them to be more tolerant by exposing them to differences between organisations. For others it

was learning professional skills like communication or attending board meetings.

> *I'm still new to going to big committee meetings for example… all those kind of things that…some of the other ones around the table will have years and years of experience of, and it is, it can be intimidating and daunting and you do need just to gain experience even in those basic things…it gives you experience and you being the sort of representative for this organisation [Interview 1, HE, L515-522]*

Opportunity to review progress

On almost a self-gratifying level, participants felt the involvement gave them an indication of their organisation's progress. Meeting with others and seeing what they were doing not only gave the participants fresh ideas but also opportunity to check their own progress. They felt positively affirmed by how their own organisation was doing in relation to others. Participants felt that as an organisation, they were not always good at 'blowing their own trumpet'. Being involved in CETL had helped them to see that they were doing better than they had thought as an organisation. Participants felt encouraged by their participation as it gave them a sense of achievement over their progress and achievements.

> *Also you go out, it confirms that you do know, you do a good job and quite often you are ahead of the game [Interview 2, HE, L209-211]*

> *[The group] are really pleased with what we bought to CETL so I think that's just helped reinforce it even more that it's working, it's working well and we carry on with it you know [Interview 13, NHS, L361-363]*

People make it

What made the collaboration really worth the effort for the participants were the other members of the collaboration. Participants valued the opportunity to meet people they otherwise would not have met and to work together. This echoes findings of previous research which noted participants' appreciation for being able to access the wider professional community through the collaboration (Selden *et al.*, 2006). In CETL, the participants shared a view

that the collaboration was very much a team experience; the collaboration would become what the members made of it. Participants were encouraged by the enthusiasm of others. The experience of growing relationships and working together did not diminish the time pressure and competing priorities participants felt, however it did compensate by tipping the balance for the benefit of the collaboration.

> *I think as a group I feel comfortable with everybody I think they are a nice group and we are able to have a good laugh when everybody's together as well which I think goes a long way when you can get on with people [Interview 14, NHS, L607-610]*

New relationships and connections also opened doors for other projects. Participants felt the advantages of CETL involvement extended beyond specific CETL projects. Many of the participants shared how much easier it had been to set up projects with other organisations because they personally knew someone from that organisation. The importance participants put on the personal contacts they had made supports the growing view of perceiving organisations as relational entities (Paré and Larner, 2004; Hosking and McNamee, 2006a). Having a personal contact point gave the advantage of not having to start from scratch. Also meeting people in the workgroups gave opportunities for ad hoc discussions that sparked ideas and even formed new projects.

> *We are in contact with people for, you know, not just the projects that are badged under CETL but a whole lot of other things that where we are just picking up the phone or emailing and bouncing ideas and taking things forward [Interview 11, NHS, L130-133]*

Having a voice

Participants on the whole felt that they had a voice, especially within their workgroups. They felt their input was significant and made a difference. Through each of the workgroups creating their own business plans and taking projects forwards, the participants felt that even though they could not necessarily affect the large overall goal of the collaboration as defined in CETL aims, they had an opportunity to influence and have their voice heard through the workgroups. The reflection from other participants was that they felt

empowered by the freedom the workgroups were given and that they were responsible for taking the vision forwards.

> *You were charged with some responsibility and then just sort of set forth and go and do it really and that was a very, you know, it's quite empowering position, it felt very creative that you were, you could develop your creativity [Interview 7, HE, L187-191]*

Fresh ideas

In addition to meeting new people, participants enjoyed the exchange of ideas that took place within the collaboration. Participants felt that CETL was a safe place to bounce ideas off each other, either face to face or via email or telephone. The social interaction, meeting people and being able to discuss thoughts and concepts made their participation in the collaboration worth the effort it required. Being involved in the CETL gave participants an opportunity to come together and share and then go back each to their own organisation and spread the knowledge further.

> *It gets you out of your own institution and meeting with people, bringing back freshened ideas [Interview 2, HE, L208-209]*

The narrative of exchanging ideas was very much hunter-gatherer like in its focus, if such an analogy is possible about knowledge sharing. The participants ventured out and came back with their 'catch' of new ideas and emergent thinking. There was a sense of excitement attached to the sharing and discussion, with participants feeling intellectually stimulated and enjoying the chance to think differently and think big – focus was on the long term vision for curriculum change not on an immediate short term response to an issue they were faced with at work. However there was also a very functional side to the sharing and bouncing of ideas. The participants wanted to see what had worked elsewhere so they could take advantage of the lessons others had learnt and to build on them. They were going out, exchanging ideas with a view to benefitting their own organisation.

> *I know that my university has benefitted enormously from that ability to cross fertilise ideas and try out new things, and see what's worked elsewhere, and*

reflect on whether we could take lessons from the way other universities have worked [Interview 10, HE, L67-70]

Career benefits

Participants perceived their CETL involvement to be beneficial for their careers. There was a sense that CETL acted as a form of external validation of their skills and experience. One participant had been successful in their application for promotion recently and they felt a large part of this was due to the evidence and examples they were able to give from their experience in the collaboration. On a more everyday level, the collaboration had presented opportunities for writing papers and presenting at conferences. Participants said that CETL had enabled them to also attend conferences by paying their fees.

We wouldn't have been able to go to some of them, no, and we wouldn't have been able to go to the workshops from our trust because obviously they had a budget and we like everybody is within that budget so we would only be able to go to what they thought was really necessary for us [Interview 4, NHS, L408-411]

Participants thought that the connections they had made could benefit their careers. Having personal connections across the region gave them an advantage. Knowing people enabled them to take things forwards easier than they could have without the network that had been created. However this was just participants expectations rather than having actual evidence of it happening. One participant felt it unfair that the relationships were available to only those who were involved and spoke about it in terms of the connections being 'almost a luxury' and 'bit of a privileged position' (Interview 8, HE, L270;276). The general view however was that the connections the participants had made would benefit others in their organisation too. Even so, there was a sense of their being personal benefits for the participants' careers through their involvement.

Benefits, I suppose is my own personal profile within different universities in the area, I've made some very good contacts with people I've got on well with, so… it's been a big benefit, those two really and hopefully, you know, it's good for my own personal academic career [Interview 9, HE, L291-295]

Interface between members and their home organisations

The participants' experience of being involved in the collaboration was also influenced by their home organisation and the perception others in their organisation had of the collaboration. The final section of this chapter explores the relationship between the individual and their home organisation through focusing on four different areas of this interaction. The first is the knowledge and understanding others in the organisation have of the collaboration. This links to the second area, which is the involvement of others in the collaboration. The remaining two areas are support from the home organisation for involvement and the organisational culture.

Knowledge and understanding of CETL

Participants' experiences of how colleagues in their home organisation viewed CETL varied greatly. Some felt CETL was widely known amongst people they worked with, whereas others felt it was largely anonymous. Participants felt that there was a relational aspect to the extent of understanding about the collaboration. Linked to this was a sense of needing to self-publicise the collaboration to colleagues in order to make it known. Participants felt that people they came into contact with regularly had a better understanding of CETL. Immediate colleagues knew but beyond that the knowledge only went as far as participants' willingness to keep talking about CETL activities to others.

> *I think it is still nebulous to a lot of wide, the wide, the people who are not actively participating and that's partly to do with us our responsibility to disseminate [Interview 5, NHS, L133-135]*

Notably, participants who felt strongly that CETL had a low profile in their organisation, thought that the failing was wider than just their own insufficiency in spreading the word across their organisations. In their view CETL did not have a high priority within their own organisation. Participants felt this could have been resolved by engaging higher level staff within the organisation early on, to make them more aware and engaged. The importance of commitment to the collaboration at all levels was noted by Sloper (2004). For some participants in CETL this was not evident. The shared perception by the participants was that if higher level staff prioritised the collaboration, then this attitude would

diffuse to the rest of the organisation. However, the participants' experience was one of trying to engage staff who did not attach the same importance and value to CETL that they did personally.

> *This summer is really about trying to get the [large project organisation is involved in] sorted out, so me coming up and saying we've got this CETL project we are involved in and wanted [you] to get involved in, that comes sometimes at the bottom of the pile [Interview 1, HE, L74-77]*

Visibility through projects or equipment made CETL more prominent to their colleagues. Participants felt that having a concrete project or an outcome enabled others in their organisation to understand CETL better. Being able to link changes to something physical that had happened in the organisation increased the meaning of CETL to colleagues. In a sense, hearing about CETL was almost irrelevant if there was nothing physical that the words related to. In one of the organisations particularly, there was a sense that many of the CETL initiatives and activities had been embedded within the organisation to such an extent that some of the individuals may not even realise they were part of a CETL activity.

> *I think the amount that people engage with things they are not directly involved with differs so I think if you interviewed people from across the school I think some people say 'oh yes, that's part of the CETL' I think other people would say 'what's this CETL thing again' because but in a way I think that's a success of embedding it [Interview 12, HE, L429-437]*

Involvement in organisation

Participants had mixed experiences of the engagement of their colleagues within their respective organisations. The involvement of colleagues could be seen to reflect their awareness and knowledge of CETL. The participants, who felt others in their organisation did not really grasp what CETL was about or did not even know it existed, shared a sense of being on a mission to get people involved. There were two reasons participants expressed for wanting to get people within their organisations more involved. Firstly, they did not want other partner organisations to think that they, as an organisation, were disengaged from the collaboration. Secondly, they felt that the gains from being

involved for both, the people and the organisation, were too great to miss. They wanted others to see the same potential to bring change and move things that they themselves felt.

> *My role is to make sure that we as [an organisation] support the whole development, move education and students forward, look at creative ways of improving education and learning in a range of environments collaboratively [Interview 5, NHS, L 43-45]*

Another view of involving colleagues was very much an ad hoc approach. When and where needed, participants felt there were individuals in their organisations who could be called upon. It was a way of looking at the collaboration in a very targeted manner and seeing where the needs could be met by colleagues and whether it would be appropriate to do so. Participants were using their connections to get people involved when needed but they felt no sense of pressure to try to engage more people.

> *I'm the convenor but also I work at the university so obviously there is certain things taking place, I've got contacts here to, who can get involved in certain projects with the contacts I have to support, because on some of the projects we have support teams quite a big part, some we haven't because it wouldn't be appropriate for our school [Interview 9, HE, L62-67]*

The third experience of involvement was one of strategically linking up CETL activities with activities taking place within their own organisation. There was one partner organisation that others viewed as an active partner in the collaboration. When talking to the participants within that organisation it was very apparent that there had been a very targeted approached within that organisation to link what was being done in the collaboration to the organisational level. The sense from the participants was that it was important to anchor what was done in CETL at an organisational level to ensure sustainability of the agenda.

> *Once the fellowships had been set up and there was somebody within the school who had the CETL fellowship for [name] workgroup and I've worked very closely with her because at the same time they set up in the school a subcommittee for [the same agenda] [Interview 6, HE, L16-19]*

Support from organisation for involvement

Previous research has shown the importance of the social support that collaborative participants receive for their involvement (Hayward *et al.*, 2000) and CETL was no different. On the whole, the participants had very positive experiences of the support they had received. Participants who were also line managers within their organisations, conveyed a sense of wanting to encourage people to be involved which reflected a desire to give people opportunities and build up their confidence. The encouragement of line managers was reflected in the participants' experiences who felt that senior management were behind them, interested to hear their suggestions and encouraging their continued participation.

> *I think because of her initial involvement in the CETL, she's very passionate about it and I think that because obviously she is my sort of my boss as such, my main boss, that she's encouraged me to get involved in it so I think that's been really good [Interview 13, NHS, L269-272]*

The desire for support from the line manager was more noticeable amongst the NHS participants. This could be because the HE participants often operated in more autonomous and less hierarchical roles within their organisations. Nevertheless, the participants appreciated knowing that those in positions higher than themselves appreciated what the collaboration was about and their personal involvement in it. Even if, at times, participants felt that there was more the management could know about CETL, there was only one participant who expressed that they had a line manager who did not support their involvement.

> *I know my current manager wouldn't see it as so important but [previous line manager] does so I think I've had to sometimes battle to say I actually need to do this [Interview 5, NHS, L184-185]*

The need for support was especially highlighted by one participant who was new to their organisation. The tension they felt as a representative of an institution new to them in a collaboration they were not familiar with was increased as they were not sure of what their organisation would be willing to commit to. The participant was representing their organisation without having a

clear idea of what authority she had or how much her willingness would be matched by others.

> *I am not coming as an established member of staff saying 'yes we can do that'. It's been quite difficult to come and say 'this is what I think can happen'. But I'm new to the organisation, can I mould the organisation into what I want to do? [Interview 1, HE, L161-164]*

Organisational cultures

Participants had a growing sense of awareness of organisational cultures and how they differed across the partners. Lingard et al. (2004) noted how collaboration is not an uniform entity, it is made up of individuals with differing organisational and professional backgrounds. With such a diverse group of partner organisations in CETL participants had expected differences but there was still a sense of surprise over how much of a role the different organisational practices had played in the collaborative process. Participants felt that they had undergone a period of adjustment to understand where each other were coming from. They were learning to separate an individual's perceptions from those of their organisation's. On a personal level they were getting to know each other, but they also had to learn to recognise each other's organisational identity. It was a process of learning both how the other members and their respective organisations worked.

> *A lot of it is just getting used to different personalities involved. And for me, I think, it was the different cultures in the different universities because…we are very much post 92, we've for particular philosophy, we've got widening participation to work alongside colleagues from…research intensive universities kind of you know it's a little bit, feels a bit different [Interview 2, HE, L350-354]*

The cultural differences were also transferred to practical aspects of the collaboration as well. Participants had battled with logistics that arose from the different ways partner organisations dealt with issues like appointments and purchasing. Participants felt like they were fighting the system to get things done. Many were frustrated by the added friction caused by the different organisational practices and finding ways to overcome them. In the workgroup when they were talking about an issue or agenda everything felt straight

forward. But then when trying to take things forward they were faced with a barricade of different practical issues in the partner organisation which they had to overcome to achieve what they wanted to.

> *[CETL] gonna finance getting laptops and you think, well you've been given these more or less why is everybody making it so difficult to receive these, we've spent hours of time just trying to circumnavigate the university systems [Interview 8, HE, L721-724]*

Summary

Participants' experiences of the collaboration were a combination of struggles and rewards. Participants were pragmatic enough to see that being involved in the collaboration was not stress-free and easy as it also involved hard work. A word that would summarise the experience of being in the collaboration is tension. The output participants saw, and expected to see in due course, outweighed the challenges. The time it took for the collaboration to develop was balanced by the depth of relationships that grew alongside it. Furthermore, participants had grounded expectations of what would be realistic to achieve through workgroups and felt that their efforts achieved justified results.

What sustained the participants' involvement, in the face of the challenges they faced with lack of time and competing job pressures, were the relationships that had been formed. Participants were stimulated by the conversations in, as well as outside, the workgroups and felt that their involvement was a beneficial learning experience aided by their fellow collaboration members. Participants felt their own organisations were benefitting from the refreshed ideas they were able to bring back. Personally they felt encouraged by seeing their own organisation's progress against other partner organisations.

Participants found their involvement in the collaboration easier if they perceived their organisation to be supportive. They felt that it was part of their responsibility to make others aware of what CETL was doing but if the senior management were not seen to be behind the initiative it was much harder to do so. Having something tangible that had happened in the organisation through the collaboration, such as new equipment, helped the participants to

communicate better about CETL with others. On the organisational level one of the challenges participants faced was overcoming and adjusting to the differences in organisational culture.

Returning to the analogy of the train journey: the participants knew the destination as it had been laid out in the HEFCE bid, however they did not know the specific route the train was going to take to get there. Along the way, the ride got a bit bumpy but their fellow passengers helped to keep up the spirits of the traveller as they continued on the journey. At the point of the interviews the train had not reached its destination but the travellers had seen enough signs pointing in the right direction to ensure them that they were on the right track. The experience of being part of the collaboration is aptly summed up in the words of one of the participants:

> *It was very time consuming, very demanding, but I think the benefits were absolutely worth it [Interview 7, HE, L298-299]*

Chapter 6. The context of the collaboration

Introduction

This chapter outlines the context of the collaboration, giving details of the settings that framed the participants' experiences of being involved. The context could be seen to play a similar role to backdrops used in theatres. The acting by itself gives the audience an idea of what the play is about but having the backdrop adds more detail and richness to the play. In the same manner, focusing on the experience of the individuals as explored in the previous chapter, gives the reader an image of what the involvement in the collaboration was like for those who participated. However when viewed in the light of the context in which it took place, there is a deepening understanding to be gained.

The context is examined through three different aspects: organisational challenges, the workgroups and the outcomes. Organisational challenges builds a picture of the complexity participants saw as the backdrop of partnership, how the number and types of organisations coming together added another dimension to the interaction that took place. After the organisational aspect, the focus will narrow down to the workgroup level which is the setting where most of the participants' face to face experiences of the collaboration took place. The focus and size of the workgroups, and how the participants became involved will be explored to give an outline of how the interaction within the group reflects the participants' experience of the collaboration. The final part of the chapter concentrates on the outcomes participants perceived from the collaboration. The outcomes can be seen to play a large part in the context of the collaboration. The chapter will end with an exploration of the perceived outcomes of the collaboration.

Organisational challenges

Organisational challenges and differences formed a major part of the context of participants' involvement. The four different areas focused upon in this section are complexity, dichotomy of competition and collaboration, HE-NHS interaction and differing student populations. The challenges of complexity and the HE-NHS dynamics were universal whereas the challenges of competition-collaboration and differences in student population varied

depending on the participants' institution. The complexity of the CETL was partly about the range of partners and partly about the actual structure of the collaboration. The second subsection focuses on the tension some participants felt due to their organisations being competitors for students and funding. Following that the HE-NHS dynamics are explored before examining how the different student populations influenced participants' experiences of involvement.

Complexity of CETL

There was an unanimous sense of the sheer complexity of CETL that the participants shared when discussing the collaboration. Participants spoke of previous involvement in partnerships and collaborations but felt that they had not been involved in anything on the scale of CETL before. The size left some feeling that CETL was intangible and difficult to explain to others unless broken down into smaller, more digestible sections. Even though participants felt CETL was on a larger scale than any partnership before, they also recognised that there was commitment across the partners to match its size.

> *[previous involvement in partnerships] but nothing on the scale of CETL I mean CETL is like another level up of you know where people have got real commitment to it [Interview 1, HE, L328-330]*

Participants felt that joining the dots between different levels of collaboration was important. On paper CETL was complex, with all the different partner organisations and workgroups, but in practice things were even more complicated. Participants were not always sure how the different parts of the collaboration fitted together. Keyton et al. (2008) expressed their belief in the importance of communication in unifying the multiple levels in which collaboration takes place. The importance of communication and being aware of what was taking place was evident in CETL. Communication within the collaboration will be discussed in further detail in the next chapter (see section Communication p.131). Convenors attended the operational management group and felt that it gave them an aerial view of the collaboration that helped join the different parts together. Some of them acknowledged how much harder it would be for people who were less involved, to make sense of it all. Being

involved in the OMG gave an advantage in seeing the bigger picture but there was also recognition that complexity was part of the reality of CETL.

> *I think there is always issue around the complexity and going in from a small group into a larger group in terms, whether you, whether your voice is heard and sometimes I think the sheer complexity of the NHS, the movement of people and people changing roles because of restructuring, that is a bit daunting but I think that's just part of it really [Interview 7, HE, L343-347]*

Alongside the structure of the CETL, participants felt that the range of partner organisations involved added to the complexity in the participants' minds. Bringing together diverse organisations was challenging, but participants believed that commitment to a shared vision united the partner organisations. Even so there were still practicalities to work through. One participant poignantly said that just bringing together the HE organisations across the region would have been challenging enough, but including the NHS added another dimension to an already complicated dynamic. In a sense, claiming that CETL was a complex structure was stating the obvious, but the participants had also witnessed the difficulties caused by the scale.

> *In my mind it has been like a really big tanker that we are trying to get going and it's been quite hard to get all the cogs to all work together to get them going the same direction [Interview 8, HE, L122-124]*

Figure 3 on the next page depicts the complexity of CETL as a combination of size and range of the collaboration. Each participant was part of the same complexity, yet some felt comfortable within the complexity and had a sense of having an aerial view of the collaboration whilst others felt challenged by it as they felt it was too large to comprehend. Each participant saw the complexity, but depending on their involvement in the collaboration they perceived it differently. For those on the fringes the collaboration appeared intangible whereas those involved in the operational management group felt that their overarching view had made the complexity manageable.

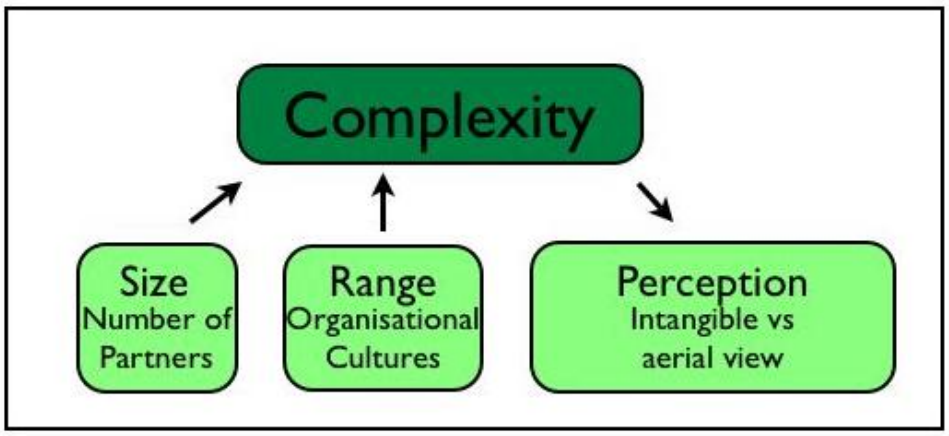


Figure 3 Factors affecting the complexity of collaboration

Competitors collaborating

Participants had noticed organisational politics being played out between the partner organisations. Two of the HE partners had very similar course portfolios funded by the same strategic health authority and understandably participants from these organisations felt that they were trying to collaborate despite being competitors. They felt that competition was an expected part of regional collaboration where organisations compete for the same pool of students. The other three HE organisations were more unique in the courses they were offering and did not feel the same tension. It had been a surprise to the NHS participants to see organisational politics being played out between HE organisations as they had expected the politics to play a part mainly between themselves and HE organisations.

> *There are some politics aren't there, with the small p, between organisations…not just between academics and health service but between the academic organisations as well which I don't fully understand but sometimes you can see them being played out in the discussions [Interview 11, NHS, L377-381]*

The participants who were affected by the competition-collaboration tension, at times felt like they were walking on a tightrope. They wanted to collaborate but then at the back of their mind they felt restricted and were cautious about sharing things that could possibly give their competitors an edge in the future. Previous research has shown that a competitive environment does not encourage collaboration (Fear and Barnett, 2003). Furthermore,

collaborating with someone previously perceived as a competitor is known to have its challenges, such as being able to trust one another (Stein and Short, 2001). Like in previous research, the tension caused by the competition-collaboration dichotomy was visible in CETL. The participants discussed their internal struggle of wanting to be frank and honest but having to be guarded about what they said. To others this felt like there was the spoken word and then the undertone of what was actually being said. The participants did note that the tension had decreased as relationships and trust between the members developed. Nevertheless, they still wanted to be careful about what they shared in case it was misunderstood by others.

> *[Competing for same student] often makes it quite difficult to collaborate so there is always an undertone of, you know, dare I say this because, you know, it might be picked up wrongly, it might be represented in a way that we wouldn't wanted it to, it might get back to my dean as me having said something that puts us in a bad light or whatever [Interview 2, HE, L218-222]*

HE-NHS dynamics

Participants relished the way CETL had enabled the education and service organisations to come together. They saw the collaboration as a platform for communication. Participants valued the opportunity to bring theory and practice together in order to build a strategy for a future health care workforce with real engagement from both of the sectors. In the interviews the participants used the term practice synonymously to NHS. This inter-changeability of terms is not unique to CETL as it is also prevalent in much of their literature. However in CETL substituting NHS with practice has interesting ramifications as SHA is part of the NHS but would not be classified as practice. Also many of the educators in the HE are still active practitioners in their fields. The way participants perceived education (or theory) and practice to be another way of saying HE and NHS is reflected in the language used in the thesis, the reader should be aware that it is an oversimplification. Regardless of the terminology used, the participants felt that CETL offered them a way of engaging in conversation that they felt otherwise would not have taken place.

That's…for me is one of the biggest benefits of the CETL, is that it actually provides a vehicle for having that discussion and bringing the two halves closer together [Interview 11, NHS, L105-107]

CETL offered the participants an opportunity for HE-NHS interaction outside the usual framework of commissioning. Participants felt that the way CETL was positioned outside the commissioning process was a real strength of the collaboration. NHS participants recognised that HE representatives did not like being driven by the financial priorities of the NHS and even if CETL was outside the process of commissioning there continued to be sensitivity about the financial aspect in the background. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, there had been an expectation of HE-NHS politics to be visible in the collaboration. However the overriding sense from the participants was pleasure on how CETL had positioned itself in relation to the HE-NHS relationship whilst maintaining meaningful engagement and opportunities to input. The way in which CETL positioned itself and the relationship with the SHA could be seen reflecting similar notions than participants desire for support by senior management (See sections Balancing act p.88 and Support from organisation for involvement p.100).

I think that [the health care and higher education communication] is a real strength of the CETL really, because there are representatives from the service, and that group is actually chaired by somebody who works at the SHA, so I think that's you know sort of really important really, an important achievement [Interview 12, HE, L255-257]

Participants felt that coming together and sharing with each other had helped to reduce the overlap between education and practice. These views coincided with those of Taylor (2007), who examined student and mentor narratives about their learning environment and recognised the importance of a conduit between practitioners and educators that would enable feedback to flow in both directions creating a high quality setting for learning. One of the NHS participants felt that previously the feedback from service had often been received as criticism by educators but involvement in the CETL had opened more positive ways of communication. By working alongside each other in the

workgroups, participants felt that they got a much better understanding of each other's work. They also perceived the links between theory and practice becoming more concrete through the collaboration.

> *I think it's bringing you know you can see where the obviously the universities are teaching the students and you can see how it relates to the practice element of it I think it is just really, us collaborating perhaps see how the practice and the theory and practice comes together [Interview 13, NHS, L445-449]*

There was a sense of good will and excitement about the conversations that were taking place between the HE and NHS organisations. Yet, the NHS participants felt they were challenged by the different timescales the two operated in. They recognised the difference in how their organisations were much more deadline driven whereas they perceived HE to be much more driven by principles. Even though the participants from the NHS were challenged by the differences, they also appreciated the opportunity it gave to step out of the 'here and now mentality' they were used to operating in and to focus on a longer term vision.

> *It can wind you up a treat when you are there… because how long it takes to debate a subject and…how you get caught up in all the niceties of it and it gets very frustrating at times. But it's also really good for you, because it stops you from being in that sort of mind set of… I've got to deliver this by x…it actually allows you to take a step back and see some different perspectives because that's what the academic people are really good at, isn't it, that's what they do for a living [Interview 11, NHS, L355-362]*

The HE participants, in comparison, were quite nonchalant about the differences between HE and NHS. They enjoyed the opportunity of working together with their service colleagues but they had not really noticed any differences that they considered were worth mentioning when talking about their experiences in the collaboration. The differences between HE and the NHS seemed more significant to the NHS participants. This could be because the majority of the academics had a health professional background so they were comfortable with the NHS whereas NHS participants were less likely to have an

academic background. In addition to the timescale differences mentioned before, one NHS participant was perplexed by the multiple interpretations the HE members read into a business plan that he had drafted and the length of the process it required until HE partners felt comfortable with the wording. Another member shared their experience of battling stereotypical views of health service staff's sense of inferior knowledge in comparison to HE staff when she was encouraging staff to get involved.

> *Unless you know people in the universities there is a bit of mystique particularly when you see all the titles and the names and it's quite daunting and people are saying 'well gosh, I'm only this practitioner' and I say yes but you are bringing your expertise to influence from a different way [Interview 14, NHS, L223-228]*

Participants felt that HE and the NHS had a good working history in the region. For them, CETL was not bridging a gap between the two but rather simply improving an already existing relationship. The HE participants, especially, noted how the good working relationships between the two were not typical in comparison to the rest of the country. There was a detectable hint of pride about how well HE and NHS worked together regionally. The collaboration was seen as a way of improving the relationship through increased interaction.

> *We have always worked close with our NHS partners, but having the CETL and the [name] work stream has given us a focus to a to enhance some aspects of that partnership [Interview 6, HE, L236-239]*

Differences in student populations

Beyond the complexity and the scale of the collaboration and the dynamics of HE and the NHS, participants felt that there were organisational differences that played a part in the participants' experiences of the collaboration. According to Walsh and Jones (2005) it is important to take account of the differing organisational cultures when planning a collaborative venture. In CETL, there was recognition of the organisational differences but the strength of feeling from some participants suggests that more could have been done with regards to this. Participants felt that the differences in student populations separated their own organisation from other organisations adding an extra challenge to their involvement. Participants thought that they were

dealing with different issues with others. The differing student populations did not stop participants' involvement, but at times they felt that their students had been disadvantaged in comparison to others. For most this was just recognising practical factors that affected organising initiatives involving students rather than holding a grudge for unfairness. It was a sense of awareness of practicalities such as the number of students, timetabling issues or student rotations from university to placement being different for different professions, when planning joint functions. These reflect closely the noted barriers of IPE, such as large student numbers (Gilbert, 2005). The findings seem to suggest that the barriers that are there on the interprofessional level are also reflected wider in an interorganisational level.

> *...but we, what they are doing, we couldn't do because our students aren't out on the placements the same time so it doesn't work really because a lot of it's got to do where the students are placed [Interview 4, NHS, L232-234]*

Workgroup – where the rubber meets the road

Practically, the workgroups were participants' main point of contact with the collaboration. Thus being a major part of the context of the collaboration. The areas discussed here are: choosing a group; the focus and size of the group, and contributing to the group. In the interviews the participants used the terms workgroup and workstream. The thesis uses the term workgroup throughout, but where participants used workstream in their narrative it was left unchanged in any quotes used from their narrative.

Choosing a workgroup

The workgroups were initiated on the first away day. People who attended were divided into six groups based on their interests. If they had no specific interest then they were placed in a group where they could potentially have something to input. There was no specific pattern to how participants found the groups they were in. Some had strong interests and experience and that made them visible candidates for a particular group, others were generally interested in the wider field within the CETL aims and wanted to contribute where possible.

> *Then, on the first away day, as they were trying to sketch out who would be involved in which of the strands, I, just by chance, was kind of put in a group [workgroup name] [Interview 2, HE, L22-24]*

The choice of workgroup was less serendipitous for those coming in as replacements. Organisations, especially if they had representatives in more than one workgroup, wanted a direct replacement – someone to take a place in the same workgroup as the person who was leaving. As described in the previous chapter (see Getting involved p. 81), the replacement person was usually someone whose role had the most overlap within the subject matter. The desire to have overlap with the agenda caused added problems for NHS partners who went through organisational restructuring and as a consequence their new role was not aligned with the workgroup anymore. Because of the realignment of roles, there had to be a change of workgroup. However this only affected one participant in the sample. There was anecdotal evidence that there were others affected, but they were not included in the sample. Had longitudinal interviews been conducted it is possible that this would have been picked up more.

> *So we got restructured and then in that restructure my job changed and I was no longer [working on area of the workgroup] because I was still managed by [person involved in CETL] who suggested that obviously [it] needs to sit with the person doing that role, which is a different role now but would I be happy to help out in a different work stream [Interview 5, NHS, L28-36]*

Workgroup focus

Finding and defining the focus of the workgroup was a major part of the early experience of being involved in the collaboration. Once the six groups were formed with people allocated to each group, the next step was for the newly formed groups to define their identity as a collective. Two of the workgroups had a core group of members that were carrying forward ideas and relationships from a previous project. This brought a sense of continuity and ease into defining what the group's focus was. In a way, they were not forming a group as such, but rather just carrying on where the previous project had left off with some new people on board to strengthen the group.

The name…came out of work that happened before the CETL, so for me that indicates its continuity with what went before…and I suppose that's what CETLs were about, they were about rewarding past activity…saying well done for doing that and now go on and do even better so in that sense it should feel a connection with what went before [Interview 10, HE, L13-19]

Other workgroups with no previous working history, went through a journey of self-discovery. They had been given a remit of the area the group was to operate in but they were left to shape the particular approach they wanted to take as a group. Participants in these groups spoke about trying to 'get a handle' on what they were trying to do, about 'figuring out' how their group fitted into the bigger picture. There was recognition of the overlap between the groups and how hard it was at times to define topics into meaningful entities. Participants were eager to start projects and felt frustrated when they could not see a clear route forward because the group did not yet have a defined focus. Finding the right group focus enabled participants to feel that they were heading in the right direction.

My main thing was to have a focus to it, I mean we were to define what we were about, what we were going to do and have a focus, for that workstream so we…could pick up projects that were suitable for the workstream [Interview 9, HE, L152-155]

Workgroup size

The workgroup size was a major issue for participants in smaller groups. They felt that the ability of the workgroup to take forward ideas was lessened by an insufficient number of people. Even if the participants' own group was a reasonable size, they felt that other groups had struggled because of their smallness. There was a general issue shared by all the groups, of arranging meetings so that the maximum number of people could attend. But for some there was the added issue of only having a handful of people committed to the group. An explanation for the struggling groups can be found in Wills and Ellison's (2007) observation of people either taking an enthusiastic, cynical or sceptical stance to collaborations. If a workgroup had more cynics and sceptics than enthusiasts it could be expected to encounter difficulties, and in a smaller group they would have been more pronounced.

Where work stream, you are only meeting six weekly, there is only [a] few of you, it's part of, it's on top of your day job, you can only do so much, you can't change the world [Interview 5, NHS, L162-165]

Participants, in the groups that struggled with small size, felt the issue was to do with having a lack of representation across the partners even though they lacked people numerically. The lack of capacity due to the low numbers was heightened by the lack of buy-in from organisations. Having representation from across the region was important to the groups and having a good representation was valued by the participants. From a practical point of view, CETL was very much a regional collaboration and a logical way of ensuring the maximum impact in the region with as wide a representation as possible.

However I remain hopeful that we can make a difference and we have had some really important new members to our core group who are representing trusts that are partners with the CETL but also trusts that aren't, that have an interest and people that have an interest in that area and that's been very precious, I've valued that widening of the remit of the committee membership [Interview 10, HE, L241-245]

The struggling group

One of the workgroups in particular seemed to struggle with its size more than other workgroups. The convenor felt that others in the group had not fully internalised the collaborative thinking. One of the group members asked for the recording equipment to be turned off during the interview before they shared about how the group should have achieved more, but had really struggled because of small numbers. All three participants interviewed from that group said that they did not choose the group as such, it but were allocated to the group. The convenor felt that they had struggled with the concept of what the group was trying to achieve before it was at a point where they felt others would embrace it and would be applicable to the partner organisations. One of the members reflected that they did not feel like they had influence on where the group was heading with the convenor taking much more of a directive role. The other member felt that sometimes out of necessity, the convenor would do

something themselves rather than delegate tasks, in order to save time. The convenor acknowledged taking on much of the work.

> *I have had the issue of buy in, I have had the issue of capacity in the group, I have felt a bit like I've done a lot of the legwork for it, that isn't to say other colleagues haven't contributed [Interview 8, HE, L509-512]*

There was no clear answer as to why this group seemed to struggle more than others with its membership. One possibility is that partner organisations did not see the importance of it and prioritised other groups when looking for representation. Another possibility would be that the group itself did not appear enticing to possible participants either because of the group dynamics or lack of history with the topic personally through interests, projects and experience.

Contributing to the group

The participants felt the tension of balancing their input into the workgroup with the limited amount of time they had as discussed in the previous chapter. The wish echoing across the workgroups was, wanting to do more but having insufficient time. This builds upon the notion of time pressure that participants felt on a personal level, which was discussed in the previous chapter (see Time pressure p.90). There was a collective sense of the group not having as much time as they would have liked. The individual struggle was projected on a group level. Participants also shared a sense of wanting to see their organisation putting more into the collaboration. Bergman and Schooley (2003) noted the importance of shared interest and commitment to the collaboration. In CETL the importance of others perceiving their organisation as active and committed was evident in the way participants spoke of their organisation's input. Participants shared information about projects they were able to bring to the workgroups from their organisations and seeing them taken forward. There was a very strong sense of wanting to contribute to the bigger picture. The emphasis was on sharing with the group something they as an organisation were doing or expertise or knowledge they had personally gained and felt would benefit others. Yet, there was room for each organisation to be individualistic in what they were doing as noted by one convenor who

commented on the diverse ways in which the same agenda had been taken forwards across the organisations.

> *As a workstream, yes we certainly haven't had the same model happening in all our different places, and that's been a huge strength actually, because we've been able to take developments that have happened in one part of the patch and seed them somewhere else if they've been seen to work [Interview 10, HE, L88-91]*

The dangling carrot – outcomes as part of the context

The outcomes participants perceived from the collaboration formed a large part of the context of their experience. There are three main areas that will be examined in this section which are networking, impact on education and practical outcomes. Being able to see or expect the outcomes was important to the participants. The outcomes gave a very concrete way of explaining or introducing the collaboration to others in their organisation. The outcomes overlap with the factors encouraging involvement. At times participants felt that both the projected and the perceived outcomes helped to balance the challenges in their involvement. However, in this chapter, the focus is on the outcomes and their wider impact whereas in chapter five it was more on the individual level.

Connecting up - Growing relationships

A continuous theme across the interviews was 'relationships and connections'. They played a significant part in the experience of being involved at both individual and organisational levels. The importance of deepening relationships and the flow of knowledge that they give has already been touched upon but it will be further expanded here to emphasize the importance it had for the participants.

Networking

Networking and being able to connect up with different organisations across the region was one of the aims of the CETL as described in the original and stage two bids to HEFCE. From the participants' comments it is apparent that they perceived CETL to have delivered on this. All participants, apart from one who felt strongly that the money would have been better spent on individual

research projects, voiced their appreciation for the networking that had taken place. Participants felt that the collaboration had enabled the organisations to come together and build good links between each other. This is in line with Kezar's (2005) findings of participants in HE collaborations who valued networking and relationships highly.

> *It's a networking organisation, as a networking function…it's really quite powerful [Interview 7, HE, L20-21]*

> *For me it's about developing networks and the quality of relationships and contacts and it's only once you got that that you can build on it for the more concrete collaboration [Interview 11, NHS, L140-143]*

Jongbloed *et al.* (2008) argued strongly for the need for HEIs to engage in constant dialogue with their stakeholders and regional partners in the light of today's networking society. The participants in CETL reflected some of this awareness of the importance of regional networking. The networking was seen to build foundations for future work. Participants felt that they were forming quality relationships that on-going partnerships could build upon. Meeting people and making connections was a vital part of the context for participants' experience of the collaboration. The connections were part of CETL which they knew would have at least a five year existence. However they also saw the potential the connections could have in the future for themselves personally as well as in the region.

> *Projects like this, the partnership and the long term trust and relationships that are built up, almost set the scene for future work, future developments, future collaborative events, because they recognise that actually there is that work based trust, you do have contacts in different places [Interview 14, NHS, L269-273]*

The immediate impact

Participants perceived the growing relationships to have an impact on their on-going experience of being involved in the collaboration. They felt CETL was bringing people together in a different way that encouraged discussions about advancing education and improved working relationships across the

partner organisations. The atmosphere created by the growing relationships was one of increased dialogue that challenged the participants to think differently.

> *I am sure everybody would walk away richer from being involved in it, all of us, you know I certainly am, from having…the different level of conversations and challenge because it does make you think [Interview 14, NHS, L443-445]*

In addition to feeling encouraged to think differently participants felt that hearing what the other organisations were doing widened their horizons. As touched upon in the previous chapter, sharing was a valuable part of the collaboration for participants. There was a flow of information between the partner organisations that had not taken place at this level before. The participants felt energised by being in an environment where they could see and hear how others were taking the same agenda forward in different settings. It could almost be seen to satisfy the innate curiosity that humans have but in a way that is positive and takes agendas forward.

> *The particular people that are working into the work streams, would see benefits in terms of their networking and knowing what's going on in other places [Interview 8, HE, L646-648]*

Participants also noticed that stereotypical boundaries between professions starting to break down through the interaction. There was an undertone of wishing the CETL could do more to bring the disciplines, especially medicine, closer together within the health community. Even though participants outwardly wished for closer relations, there was a note of separation detectable in the language they used, not perceiving medicine as one of the health professions but as a separate entity. Becher and Trowler (2001) would argue that all disciplines create their own tribe and territory yet there are also connections between them. Changing a stereotype with a long history is a challenge but participants were encouraged by the increased communication between medicine and other disciplines – even if the barriers had not been broken down as much as they would have liked.

Medicine and dentistry are still a little law unto themselves and if you really want to modernise and…get them on board and think about breaking down some of the roles and thinking…a bit clearly about what's the commonality, I mean everybody's got a unique contribution, all the disciplines have, but there is also a commonality and I think CETL could be used more as a vehicle to do that [Interview 14, NHS, L429-434]

I mean the other thing it did, it did for us that it gave us as an institution access to medical education because you know we don't do medical education so we had very little collaboration or liaison with say the medical school [Interview 2, HE, L236-239]

Getting connected across the organisations also meant getting connected across the region. Participants felt that they had an opportunity to get out of their organisations and link up regionally. Participants perceived increased level of communication across the region, however they acknowledged the difficulty they still had in organising projects that included both north and south of the region. This concurs with previous research that noted that geographical proximity increased collaboration (Katz and Martin, 1997). Even if there were not that many projects that encompassed all the partners, there was a sense of seeing a holistic picture across the region as well as witnessing commitment across the area. The atmosphere participants were surrounded by was encouraging them to focus wider than just staying within their organisations and taking the agenda forward with colleagues locally. It was not just meeting people but meeting people from different organisations that helped to view things differently.

I think over the time probably the individuals have moved from that defensiveness of their own organisation into a broader way of thinking across the region which is refreshing and a place that I've always thought we needed to have [Interview 8, HE, L265-269]

Education, education, education

CETL's aim was to "to foster curriculum development for employability in the modernised health care service" as given in the stage two proposal to HEFCE (2004). The participants' focus however, was more on their own specific

area of teaching and learning, their agenda, rahter than focusing on the big picture of what kind of education was needed for a modern healthcare workforce. It could be argued that the OMG and AMG were in charge of the overall direction of the CETL, therefore they were responsible for ensuring the collaboration was heading in the right direction. One of the criticisms from workgroup members, especially those who were low involvement, was not knowing how their workgroup fitted into the big picture. On the whole, this was one of the only noticeable differences between high and low involvement participants. Participants had a desire to know how their actions contributed to the bigger picture, yet on another level they were happy just to go along rather than challenge and discover how each part contributed to the overall goal. There was a lack of ownership over the big vision, but individuals were keen to own their particular area. Participants felt they could influence their own agenda whereas the impact they had on the overall vision was less.

> *It depends on the different layers being joined up because I think if you are in a work stream and that's where your focus is then you want to meet your goals, it's not necessarily your job to think about the bigger picture and think about the long term future and I think having the way that our roles have been separated here probably helps to make sure that all those lines are covered [Interview 12, HE, 227-232]*

In the light of this, much of the participants' discussions about education and curriculum were related to issues immediate to them, their students, their courses and institution rather than having a wider perspective of the policy changes needed nationally in order to bring change into the curriculum. When looking at intergroup dynamics, Richter et al. (2005) noted that people represent both themselves and the group they belong to. In a similar vein, participants' interest and focus in the collaboration could be seen to reflect the group they felt they represented. There was a very earnest desire to improve the experience of the students they came in to contact with. Participants wanted other staff to adopt the methods they were exploring as a group, such as using patient narratives as part of the teaching. Being encouraged by seeing the benefits for their students was more applicable to HE staff and those NHS participants who had direct involvement with students in their daily role, those

without direct student contact had their focus more on the education in a wider sense. Participants could see the potential in what they were doing and wanted the students in their organisations to benefit from it. Participants felt that their involvement would help others but it would also help them to keep their teaching fresh.

> *I wanted to get out of it [group name] was to learn, to get some new ideas…some new innovations for our teaching here and I think same with the [other group], I wanted to go and find out what other people were doing, so we could see if we could fit it in somewhere here, so obviously to improve our teaching, improve the students learning [Interview 4, NHS, L279-284]*

Even if the participants did not talk about the large scale vision of a curriculum for a modern healthcare workforce, they did have a desire to impact on as many students as possible. The partner organisations were all given equipment, such as ultrasound or personal digital assistants (PDAs), however participants were aware that the students would only benefit from the equipment if they ensured it was being used. They felt responsible for making sure the equipment would benefit students rather than gather dust, forgotten in a cupboard. Participants were also aware of trying to extend the impact beyond the students they personally came in to contact with. Participants reported that feedback from students was positive but there were always more students they had not reached. Participants felt there were good tools coming out that would benefit students and they wanted more students to have the opportunity to use them. Especially as they could see the initiatives benefitted the students' learning experience and they received positive feedback about them.

> *I think it's the students talking about it and saying it's good and they don't have that experience anywhere else which is why we are piloting it [Interview 5, NHS, L283-284]*

The wish for having the maximum number of students in their organisations to benefit, was also challenging to participants. They wanted as many students as possible to be involved, but then with some of the projects there were physical limitations which made it impossible to include many students. In one of the projects, participation was voluntary for nursing students

whereas for medical students it was part of their curriculum, an issue which has occurred in interprofessional initiatives before (Grossman and McCormick, 2003; McKenzie and Bjornson, 2005). As described in the section about organisational differences, the student numbers varied greatly across the disciplines adding the challenge of whom to involve and why. Participants did not want involvement to become exclusive to the keenest students but they reported having to choose between who would benefit and those who would not. There were also practical considerations like how to create a project that would benefit the maximum number of students without minimizing the potential impact it could have. Some felt that an all inclusive mind-set could dilute the message too much.

> *But it's difficult to actually think how can you get all students involved, there's only sort of certain type of students that can be involved and its' thinking of scenarios that you can get everybody involved […] I think if you go too large, then it spoils it [Interview 13, NHS, L491-494;497]*

In the original bid documents and in the meeting minutes the intention to have student engagement in CETL itself, rather than just through the projects, was strongly made. This will be discussed in more detail in the next findings chapter focusing on the collaboration through the meeting minutes, so it will only be mentioned briefly here. The overriding sense from the documents is the importance of having student voice within the CETL. Whether this is due to the 'student as a customer' view that is becoming more prevalent in higher education, in a similar manner to which patients' voices now have a role in care planning, or because those involved in writing the bid felt it aligned with principles HEFCE valued, is not clear. However, whatever the reason, student engagement was a goal and a desire. How this translated to practice is very different. Only one of the workgroups professed to have meaningful student engagement and they themselves acknowledged that other groups had not managed to be so successful with engagement. The student engagement remained at a superficial level, possible reasons for this were the way the collaboration was set up, lack of practical ways of engaging students beyond their curriculum activities and lack of perceivable benefits for students to engage. Overall, the picture was very much workgroups wanting to improve the

student experience and bring change however they did not have one of the main stakeholders as part of the conversation.

> *We've certainly got students engagement in our group, which you know other people haven't necessarily got to the same extent, and which the CETL was keen to do [Interview 8, HE, L534-536]*

What makes it all worth it – the practical Outcomes

The opportunity to network and see positive changes in education were motivators in participants' involvement in the collaboration. However, separating a single benefit or outcome as a motivator was impossible. The motivation for involvement in collaboration appeared to be a complex phenomenon with various different factors playing a part in the process. The less quantifiable outcomes or benefits mentioned above, together with the more tangible material and financial benefits participants had witnessed, play a part in how beneficial participants perceived their collaborative experience to be. These findings suggest that just having successful outcomes is not enough to sustain involvement and encourage participation, there needs to be a balance of the organisational structure and demands not outweighing the potential participants believe the collaboration has.

Financial benefits and equipment

The power of money was reflected in the CETL. One of the participants aptly said "there are some things that will run for certain time on good will but funding makes everything much easier" [I3, HE, L196-197]. Participants felt that the capital CETL had behind it, especially the backfill money, which is described in more detail in the introduction, helped the collaboration to go further than it would have done by just having a shared agenda with no financial backing. Participants felt that money made things easier. They also appreciated the recognition that people cannot give their time up for free. Even though the involvement still brought tensions, the backfill money gave a sense of recognition of the effort the participants put into the collaboration. The backfill money was used differently across the partners. The participants across the partner organisations spoke of the recognition they felt it gave them but there was no mention of a sense of accountability or responsibility attached to it.

Participants perceived the backfill money as an encouragement, not as a reward with expectations of output attached to it. The backfill money was almost symbolic but the resounding sense from the participants was that they valued it and it enabled their participation – even if it did not necessarily reduce their workload.

> *There are still costs, I mean it still takes up staff time, we hope that there are benefits that match that in terms of research productivity and advancing practice in the field, so the model of the staff buy back is one which is successful for us, the informal models where staff will be engaged are much more challenging [Interview 3, HE, L102-107]*

There was a distancing of self and own organisation from money. Some suspected other organisations to be involved because they did not want to miss out on the money. However they perceived their own organisation to be much more altruistic in their involvement whilst at same time admitting that the money CETL brought with it had enabled them to take things forward and purchase equipment. Regardless of the reason participants attributed to the organisations' involvement, they appreciated the finance the partnership brought with it. Capital money was used for both equipment and as a resource. Having the financial momentum behind the collaboration enabled the members to focus on building a structure that had a greater permanence about it, not just a haphazard concoction with more goodwill than effort put into it. Participants felt that money did not make the collaboration but it certainly made it easier.

> *It had a lot of money, so every partner who are there, want to make sure they get their fair share of the capital money [Interview 9, HE, L173-175]*

> *I mean often these collaborations are done on a shoestring or unfunded anyway and are completely reliant on the enthusiasm and good will, I think the fact that it was funded meant that resources could be put behind it and people could really be enabled and it meant that you could develop a real infrastructure [Interview 12, HE, L374-378]*

One view of defining collaborations is in terms of the exchange of commodities (Lingard *et al.*, 2004) however in CETL the material commodities

came from the outside, namely HEFCE, hence a ‘trading relationship’ was not created to the full extent. There was an exchange of knowledge and ideas but on a material level the partners did not engage in exchanging commodities. This did not appear to impact the collaboration during its funded phase, however it would have meant that once the external source of commodities finished, the partners would have to make a decision about whether they were willing to start exchanging material commodities as well as ideas. Although the equipment was not the main purpose of the collaboration, it still represented a very visible reminder of the collaboration for the participants. The partners received video-conferencing equipment which was an overt, tangible symbol of the collaboration in the organisations - it would have been difficult to miss the large screens that suddenly appeared. All partner organisations were given the equipment, but then, it was up to the partners to make use of it. Participants felt responsible for ensuring the equipment was used as much as possible and for the benefit of students. Participants had also noted how the equipment had made their life easier.

> *Also it’s saved on the cost because we don’t have to go to the meetings over at [other site] now so we can videoconference it. And also we can videoconference lectures so that’s a big, so you know you don’t have to trail over to [other site] they can stay over there, so it saves their travelling time, because obviously they are on a budget and travelling is expensive [Interview 4, NHS, L422-428]*

Participants appreciated the purchasing power CETL brought with it. The organisations were able to purchase equipment they otherwise would not have been able to buy. The participants felt CETL had created an extra resource for them. One of the participants was quick to note that CETL should not be viewed just as a pot of money and felt strongly that some people had misconceived the idea of what the collaboration was about. The financial power participants felt went beyond the large expense of equipment to the very small one-off things such as conference fees or being able to spend some money on bus hire to take students to a CETL activity. These smaller financial contributions were reported to have made a difference in the working lives of the participants and enabled them to do things that otherwise would have been much harder for

them to attain. Rather than the amount of money that was spent, participants appreciated the extra opportunities they felt it gave them.

> *I mean the benefit for the school was really I suppose on a material level in terms of the resource and equipment that came in, we got access to capital money for things that enabled us to buy equipment [Interview 2, HE, L161-163]*

Organisational benefits

Participants witnessed a wider benefit that went beyond themselves personally and had an impact across their organisation. They described it as a knock-on effect from the individual benefit to wider audience. There was better understanding across the region about healthcare education through the individuals gaining better understanding of the partner organisations. Participants felt that both their colleagues and students were benefitting from the opportunities to facilitate better learning that they had gained through CETL. On a more concrete level, the collaboration gave opportunities to reward and recognise individuals in their organisations by offering them a CETL fellowship and therefore expanding the involvement within their organisation. There were also more ad hoc opportunities that arose and gave chances to include others in specific projects. An aspect that participants appreciated was that the opportunities were not just limited to academic staff as often is the case.

> *It's given our, some of our technicians an opportunity, because often opportunities come the way of academics and not of support staff, so we were very pleased to see that, because we do like to think that we give people opportunities and enable them to grow in school [Interview 12, HE, L445-449]*

Summary

Participants perceived CETL to be a complex structure as a result of the number and range of partner organisations. They had noticed challenges different organisational cultures brought with them but for most participants it had not hindered their participation. Participants appreciated the opportunity for HE and the NHS to have a platform for discussions outside the usual commissioning route. The NHS participants especially appreciated the opportunity CETL had given them to step outside their usual operating timeframe and focus on the long-term vision rather than meeting short-term

targets. On a practical level participants had noticed the difficulties of engaging students across the organisations in joint initiatives because of the different student numbers and timetabling issues.

Most participants' involvement in the collaboration took place at a workgroup level. Participants had become involved in their workgroups in different ways, some deliberately choosing a particular group, whereas others were happy to become involved in any of the groups. Each workgroup defined its own focus and identity, participants struggled with not having clear goals during this period but also recognised the importance of finding their own way. Each workgroup was unique in their focus and way of functioning. Participants perceived themselves as bringing contributions from both self and their organisation to the group.

The relationships that were forged through CETL were a major part of the participants' experience of being in the collaboration. Through networking regionally across HE and NHS partners, an atmosphere that encouraged fresh thinking and challenged the participants was created. Participants also knew their own limits and were keen to get other educators on board with their specific agenda in order for more students to have the opportunity to be influenced by it. There was a very material side to what involvement in the collaboration was about. Even though participants felt that they were not engaged in the collaboration for financial reasons, they felt that the collaboration had been able to achieve more because of the financial resources behind it. In a sense, the money did not make the collaboration but it did make it easier. The finance brought with it a sense of commitment both from the collaboration itself and the partner organisations.

Chapter 7. Collaboration through meeting minutes

Introduction

In this chapter the aim is to examine the CETL as it was presented through the meeting minutes. The three aspects that the chapter will focus on are the day to day running of the collaboration, the contextual side of the collaboration and the structure of the collaboration. The first section examines the issues relating to the day to day running of the collaboration through focusing on communication, organisational issues, practicalities and projects. The middle section looks at the context of the collaboration as it was expressed in the meeting minutes. The main areas of focus are policy issues, time pressure, giving responsibility and involving students. In the final section the emphasis is on the make up of the collaboration. The focus and identity, structure, evaluation and workgroups are explored to build a picture of how the make up of the collaboration was discussed and defined in the meeting minutes. There are overlaps between some of the findings presented here and the two previous chapters. The aim of this chapter is to create a picture of the collaboration as portrayed through the minutes. Some references to similarities with the interview data will be made but the data presented in this chapter is solely from the meeting minutes.

Why meeting minutes

The meeting minutes offer an insight into the life of the collaboration from a different angle than the interviews. As touched upon in the Methods section (see Sources p.65) minutes of the meetings are a relatively detached account of what took place in contrast to interviews where the account is coloured by the individual's experience. But what is more important than the level of relative detachment is the overview they offer for the whole duration of the collaboration. In this chapter the aim is to examine the CETL as it was presented through the meeting minutes. In comparison to interview quotes, extracts from meeting minutes appear almost clinical. Yet, even if they are a bit of a 'dry read' on their own, they give an account of an event or discussion that took place in the meeting and even more so when examined cumulatively - they tell a compelling story of the life of the group.

The OMG as a group

The Operational Management Group (OMG) together with the directorate (director, deputy director and CETL manager) was responsible for the running of the collaboration. The group included the directorate, representatives of each of the workgroups and each of the partner organisations. The workgroups were represented by the convenors and some of the convenors also acted as representatives for their organisations. The group was chaired by the CETL director and the minutes were taken by the CETL secretary. By participants accounts the director was a well known and respected senior academic in the region. The directorate was based at the lead organisation however they tried to act neutrally which was reinforced by the fact that they did not act as representatives for the lead organisation. Their effort to be seen as a neutral hub for the collaboration was noticed by the participants who appreciated the independent position of the directorate. The OMG met approximately 9 times a year (See Table 9 on p.66). The meetings were held in a central location at premises that were easily accessible for all members. The usual attendance for a meeting was 10-14 members. When unable to attend the organisational representatives or convenors usually sent someone else to represent them.

The directorate was the conduit for information flow between the OMG and the AMG. There was also some overlap in the membership of the group with approximately one third of members of the OMG also attending the AMG. The AMG's focus was on strategic guidance and ensuring the collaboration stayed responsive to the needs of the partner organisations. The OMG and AMG were in regular communication with each other with the OMG often asked for feedback on specific issues from the AMG. The communication from the OMG to the workgroups took place mainly through the convenors and the CETL manager who attended all the workgroup meetings. During 2005, the group was called the Shadow Management Group. Once the CETL manager took her post it became the OMG. However for the sake of clarity, the group will be singularly referred to as the OMG throughout the thesis. As the group membership remained largely the same before and after the name change and the role of the group was identical, there is no pressing need to differentiate between them.

Day to day running

The OMG was responsible for the day to day running of the collaboration jointly with the directorate. It made the decisions that affected the expression of what CETL became. Once in post, the manager and secretary did most of the legwork of the collaboration but their actions were guided by the OMG's decisions. The four specific aspects of the daily life of the collaboration that are touched upon here are communication, organisational issues, practical issues and projects.

Communication

Communication had a central role in the collaboration's life. From the start communication was identified as a risk factor within the collaboration by the AMG. Hence much of the time in the early OMG meetings was spent discussing the communication strategy. The AMG questioned the potential risk associated with communication. The main concern was the collaboration's capacity to keep people informed. The risk was seen to be in the internal communication between the different parts of the collaboration rather than communication with external agencies. In response the OMG dedicated their next meeting to brainstorming about the communications strategy. The ideas from the group were then taken forward by the deputy director. The OMG was happy overall with the communications strategy they created but felt that students and evaluation were areas where there were gaps. There was an undercurrent of lack of focus on evaluation and students across the collaboration. This was also reflected in the interviews as participants expressed a wish for more student engagement (see section Education, education, education p.120). The role of evaluation in the collaboration will be discussed further towards the end of this chapter (see p.147). As Walsh and Kahn (2010) point out, roles facilitate action, evaluation will not happen in a pressured academic environment, without someone taking on the role of evaluator. In CETL participants recognised the importance of evaluation and student engagement but since no one had the specific responsibility relating to these, the action did not follow.

Date	Quote	Reference
27.7.2005	That it was discussed at the Strategic Management (Advisory) Group meeting that Communications was identified as a major area of risk for the partnership	41.i
26.10.2005	That there were some gaps, i.e. Student group, Evaluation interface etc., that this group would need to take forward	20.1.xii

The OMG had a targeted approach to communication. From the beginning they were aware of the importance of keeping as many people as possible in the loop. Early in the collaboration there was much talk about a quarterly newsletter that would be sent out to all the partners and also used as a way of publicising what the collaboration was doing. The first edition was planned to coincide with the official launch of the CETL. For one reason or another, the newsletter stopped after a few editions. The minutes do not record on why, when or how it was stopped. The partners were requested to send newsworthy items to the CETL office so it is likely it got pushed down the list of priorities as the members balanced what was essential and non-essential activity. The high hopes for the newsletter were possibly a casualty of the balancing act participants performed as described in chapter five (see Balancing act p.88).

Date	Quote	Reference
15.2.2006	The CETL newsletter is to begin circulation on Friday 17th February 2006. It can be sent electronically if requested and it will be on the CETL website. Every three months the newsletter will be published and so if there is anything members would like to include in future publications please let the CETL office know via the CETL email address.	40

Having a flow of information across the collaboration was important to the OMG. Communication across the workgroups was an issue that was raised in the meetings with serious concern. Urquhart *et al.* (2007) highlighted the challenges of HE and NHS organisations planning joint activities due to their complex and changing nature. This could be seen as part of the challenge the OMG faced when planning the communications strategy. The group felt that they needed to find a way to encourage cross workgroup information flows since concerns had been raised in the workgroups. The concern was also reflected in the interviews. Participants felt that they were not sure how the workgroups linked together and apart from convenors they shared a sense of not having an overall vision as discussed in the previous chapter (see Complexity of CETL p.105). Participants felt they had to trust that those in the

OMG and AMG would keep a track of the overall vision whilst they did their part at the grassroots level.

Date	Quote	Reference
14.2.2007	The Group looked at a series of diagrams that were produced during the Away Day. This stimulated a conversation about commissioning expertise, and the need for communication between workgroups for collaborative working.	62.b.i

The two main portals for communications were the CETL website and email. The website had an internal password protected site for communication and keeping those involved updated, as well as an external site for promotion. Once the workgroups were functioning, each became responsible for submitting and updating information to their own workgroup area on the site. During the first year of the CETL there were show and tell events to discuss the content of the website. As the responsibility of the website content was on the individual workgroups the quantity and quality of content varied across the site. Regardless of the focus on the communications strategy, there was no single person appointed to be responsible for communication overall. Furthermore, workgroups were given responsibility for adding information to their own sections of the website but it was unclear from the minutes if anyone had the responsibility for the totality of the website.

Date	Quote	Reference
27.4.2005	The URL had now been granted as: http://www.CETL4HealthNE.ac.uk, and it was now time to start developing the web-site and give it an external and an internal view.	10
11.1.2006	The new web-site is now up and running but needs to have more content in all areas in particular relating to the work streams. It is intended to run a series of show and tell sessions followed by discussions about how the work groups envisage populating their particular areas.	33.a.vi

The website also provided an internal communication tool for emailing all the people involved in the collaboration. At first, communication was conducted through a mailing list but after the first year it was decided, at the suggestion of a technical expert, that an email tool within the website itself would work better. There were practicalities of communicating that had to be sorted out. The organisational differences, which have been highlighted in the previous chapters, also played their part in the communication strategy. For example, due to NHS policy on attachments to NHS email addresses, it was decided that

the easiest way to circulate documents would be to upload them to the website and attach a link to the document in an email. The OMG members also noted that this would stop participants' mailboxes filling up. The tension the interview participants felt, as discussed in chapter five (see Balancing act p.88) was also noticeable in the discussions about communications. There was a balance to be found between cross workgroup information flow and flooding members with emails. OMG members agreed that sifting through the information they received was a challenge and in a set of meeting minutes there was a request to highlight the emails that needed a response.

Date	Quote	Reference
17.5.2006	[manager] informed the group that the existing mailing lists that are in place will be replaced in the near future by using the Communications tool on the website.	50.ii.b
23.9.2009	Can we put in ACTION REQUIRED on emails to help partners when going through emails	3.c

A recurrent theme in the meetings was a problem being highlighted by a member regarding email or the website. These issues were always solved quickly, yet reading through the minutes one is left with lingering questions, what if someone did not talk about the issues or problems they experienced with member of the OMG? Who would be able to address it on their behalf? Most of the people involved in the CETL would be classed as digital immigrants as opposed to being digital natives (Prensky, 2001). Using information technology is not instinctive to digital immigrants and therefore some CETL members may have felt embarrassed to admit that they were having problems. Possibly they did not trust their own IT literacy skills enough to be able to make that judgement or they may have attributed difficulties with IT to their own lack of skill rather than problems with the software or hardware. The OMG was active in dealing with technological issues; but it was not evident that there was a clear pathway that collaboration members with technical problems should follow beyond the haphazard word of mouth procedure.

Organisational issues

The OMG minutes focused on the importance of feedback and bi-directional communications between the OMG and partner organisations. Repeatedly there were requests for feedback from the partners to proposals or initiatives that the OMG discussed. The role of this feedback was to ensure the

partners agreed with and supported the collaboration. Previous research has shown the importance of a shared vision (Henneman *et al.*, 1995; Stein and Short, 2001). The OMG wanted the partners to own the collaboration and the feedback of information and ideas helped to encourage this sense of ownership and the influence to develop. The communication with the partner organisations was through people and therefore with people. With information that needed to be cascaded through the collaboration, the OMG communicated with the convenors who would then communicate with individuals in their workgroups. On issues that required a response from the partner organisations, the OMG communicated with the organisational representatives, some of whom also were convenors. The convenors had a key role in the communications of the collaboration. There was also a level of organisational freedom that was visible in the minutes. There were shared, general events that took place across all of the partner organisations such as appointing CETL fellows and receiving equipment. However, within these general parameters, the organisations were given the opportunity to apply their own preferences to how they chose the fellows or used the equipment. CETL gave the overall direction but each partner adjusted them to suit their own requirements.

Date	Quote	Reference
27.7.2005	That each HE & NHS partner would appoint a 'Foundation Fellow', for them to use strategically in their own terms (e.g. something that demonstrated evidence and fitted the criteria of their own organisation).	38.1.i

The organisations were asked to sign partnership agreements, as requested by HEFCE, to signal their commitment to the collaboration. When there were decisions to be made that needed feedback from the partner organisations, members of the OMG were asked time and time again to go back and confer with colleagues in their own organisation before sharing 'the organisation's view'. Part of this was very practical, such as discovering and overcoming organisational differences in areas like purchasing and hiring but another aspect of it was giving responsibility to the partner organisation. For example, CETL offered equipment to partners. However the responsibility was on the individuals within the organisations, to find out how to proceed internally, in order to take advantage of what was offered. This also applied to the backfill

payments made to the fellows, money was available but it was responsibility of the organisations to claim it.

Date	Quote	Reference
27.4.2005	Newcastle will pay all invoices with minimal requirement for accompanying paperwork, but it will be the responsibility of the Partners to hold sufficient documentation for Audit purposes if the need arises.	5.1
23.11.2005	That the payments were being made to the Partners who had sent the details of the Finance Departments to [secretary], although details had not been received from all Partners	27.j.i

Practicalities

The practical issues of running a large collaboration were visible in the OMG minutes. There were aspects of the collaboration that could be anticipated and planned for but there were other issues that the collaboration needed to address as they emerged. These ranged from the financial side, discovering if different organisations need to pay VAT on certain equipment, to finding the right secretarial contacts within organisations to help arrange meetings on their premises. The OMG's approach was to deal with the issues as they emerged rather than trying to plan ahead for what might happen. If an issue was highlighted that required a response from each institution, then the representatives went back to their organisations to find the answer. Once the information was gathered, the issue was addressed jointly. There were other practicalities with hiring IT technicians and research assistants, such as selecting host organisations from the partners and ascertaining the differences in their hiring processes. The finances were in place for hiring both IT technicians and researchers. Yet there were organisational hurdles to overcome which were evident in the OMG minutes, such as ensuring that the job description would fill the organisational human resources criteria, or that others in the organisation understood the responsibilities associated to the job.

Date	Quote	Reference
18.7.2007	That it must be recognised that the Technician works for the CETL and not the host organisation (that a service level agreement may be needed).	96.2.v.e
18.7.2007	That a draft Job Description with bullet pointed requirements would prepared to enable the host institutions to prepare the final Job Description.	96.2.iv

Practicalities arose from using the equipment that was purchased. With the video conferencing, it was a case of ensuring staff were trained to use the equipment. The issues with the ultrasound equipment were more deep rooted. The main issue with the ultrasound was a lack of qualified staff across partners to use the equipment. Amongst the partner organisations, there was only one radiography school and its staff were engaged in the collaboration, but more experienced people were needed. This may be an area where the medical and non-medical division was apparent, as ultrasound is widely used in medicine, whereas it is yet to attain a similar role in other health professional education. Hence not having staff who felt comfortable using it as part of their teaching was a problem. From the minutes, it was possible to see that the desire for the ultrasound equipment came more from the partner organisations offering medical education. This was a view which was expressed by some of the interview participants. However there was a positive side to this, participants from post 1992 institutions commented that they had benefitted from being able to learn from the expertise of staff in the medical school in using ultrasound equipment.

Date	Quote	Reference
25.4.2007	In terms of videoconferencing technical support, members of the OMG meeting asked for an "idiot's guide" of how to use the equipment.	87.iii
19.3.2008	Across the board there is a lack of experienced people (e.g. radiographers) available for partners to use the equipment to its full advantage. The OMG suggested engaging with non-Partner NHS staff to fill this gap	133.b.i

Projects

The projects took place mainly at a workgroup level, with reports back to the OMG on progress. However there were some projects that were more prominent in the discussions. They were the ones that involved equipment bought by the collaboration. The two main projects that OMG focused on were the lecture capture system and the use of hand held devices (PDA). It appears that the drive for both of these, came very much from the people in OMG, who were involved in writing the proposal to HEFCE, rather than rising up from the workgroups, as both were proposed before the workgroups had finalised their business plans. Eventually both of these projects were located in workgroups, but the OMG were instrumental in getting them up and running.

Date	Quote	Reference
19.4.2006	[Lecture capture system] would be innovative and would be useful for international students. The aim is for it to be functionally useful and to fit with the teaching and learning ethos of the CETL. The CETL is considering piloting this system and wants to gauge Partners interest.	46.ii.b

The plan to use PDAs was included in the HEFCE proposal as one of the intended activities of the collaboration. It was possible to follow the development process of the PDA project through the minutes. Originally the idea was to pilot it with a range of professions but practicalities meant that at first it was only piloted with medical students. As the pilot progressed, there were concerns over reoccurring costs involved with the equipment with network charges and the cost of data chips. The feedback from the students was mainly positive, but some uncertainty over the cost of using this technology was apparent in the discussions. The overriding sentiment was that money should not be spent unless it benefitted education.

The OMG implemented what had been planned in the stage two bid, but they failed to include other disciplines in the first pilot. The PDAs were later piloted with nurses and pharmacy students, but less time was spent on discussing this in the OMG, as the focus of the group had then shifted towards exploring the options for the continuation strategy. Whilst cost may have been a valid reason for not expanding the pilot, it could be seen to enforce the traditional hierarchy within the health service, where medicine is given priority. One participant felt this especially keenly and expressed disappointment over the advantages they perceived medical students received over their own students, even though they recognised student numbers as the main reason for it, not the discipline.

Date	Quote	Reference
28.10.2004	Recently, the NHSU, NT&W SHA and Northumbria have been examining the impact of 'Mobile learning' - this work will be reporting in November 2004. We will build on this experience to introduce the use of mobile devices (phones or PDAs) to access learning materials and facilitate communication	Stage two bid Part C, 7.3
27.4.2005	It is planned that these devices will be evaluated on a larger scale pilot with medical, nursing and other allied health professional students.	5.2
10.12.2008	There is a danger in adopting this kind of product of ending up chasing technology rather than providing a service.	161.b.xiii
10.12.2008	[Name] felt that whether it is useful for nurses would be dependent upon their stage of training.	161.b.xv

As mentioned before, another project that the OMG focused upon was the lecture capture system. This idea was introduced in the second year of the collaboration, with the plan of taking it forward only if the partners supported it. The lecture capture system was not universally adopted across the partners. Nine systems were installed across the partner sites, yet four of these remained unused. Some partners used the system extensively, whereas others were oblivious of its existence. This may suggest, that the project was taken forward without the full engagement of all partners. Some may have been genuinely interested and others may not have wanted to miss out on the capital expenditure that would come their way if they agreed to be involved. The non usage raised questions in the OMG discussions. The group explored how to better support partners in using the technology, as well as relocating the equipment from a non-usage partner site to a site, which expressed interest in using it. It could be, that the organisations supported the idea, but then failed to find a person who would champion the equipment within the organisation, especially as it was not exclusive to medical or health professions but available to any lecturer who used the space where it was installed. This again resonated with Walsh and Kahn's (2010) notion, mentioned earlier in this chapter, of roles that need to be filled or owned in order for action to take place.

Date	Quote	Reference
19.4.2006	[Name1] has conducted a teleconference with Lectopia regarding systems for capturing lecture, video and audio. […] The CETL is considering piloting this system and wants to gauge Partners interest.	46.ii.b
20.5.2009	[Name2] reported that there have been discussions with Recap and questions have arisen because some Partners are using Recap in innovative ways and want more whilst other Partners are not using it.	2.2
20.5.2009	[Name 2] also reported that the Recap project has stalled in [HE partner 1]. CETL, in agreement with [HE partner 1], has decided to relocate the installation to [HE partner 2]	2.2

The updates on projects that took place in workgroups, were more like progress reports by the convenor to the group than discussions. At times, workgroups asked advice from the OMG on specific matters relating to a project, but mostly the aim was to keep the group up to date with what was taking place at grassroots level. Hence the OMG knew about different initiatives that were taking place and if required were able to give direction, or link people to the projects. In addition to the website, the OMG was the main method of communication for workgroups to hear about what other members were doing through their convenors attending the OMG. Over the years, the convenors followed the development of different workgroup projects, such as the Narrative Archive or the Patient Safety Day (see Table 12 p.73 in History of CETL chapter) through the updates in the group. CETL did not create as effective a way of sharing information across workgroups as they wished, but the OMG offered a way of keeping up to date on what others were doing, without the pressure of having to attend yet another meeting. Whether the information was further circulated within the workgroups or partner organisations was the responsibility of the workgroup convenors. The interviewed convenors mentioned in passing comments, the difficulty of not knowing if the information they shared had been cascaded or not. Looking back, going back and conducting brief interviews after the document analysis was completed, could have helped to discover further data on areas highlighted in the document analysis, such as how good the flow of information was across the collaboration. For the workgroups, the OMG was both an advisor role, willing to help, and a way for sharing what the group had done.

Date	Quote	Reference
23.5.2007	The PWE workgroup would like Partners to help collect narratives. If Partners are in contact with people who have stories to tell, please get in touch with the PWE workgroup.	89.i
23.1.2008	Part of the PGL business plan was to carry out scoping exercises. [Name] has created a questionnaire which she would appreciate partners to disseminate to programme managers/teaching and learning committees to try and get the widest possible base for how people are using PGL.	120.ii.a

Context

The contextual side of the collaboration, focuses on issues that were wider than the daily exchanges taking place in the collaboration. They reflected partly the nature of the collaboration and partly the climate in which the collaboration took place. The specific areas that will be discussed below are policy, time pressure, responsibility and students.

Policy

During the life of the CETL, there were government policy documents published that had an impact on the partner organisations or the courses they provided. When a new policy document was published a member, or an expert outside the group, whichever was most appropriate, would give a presentation on it to the OMG. The emphasis was on making members aware of the implications of the policy and reviewing how it would affect CETL activities. The Darzi report (Darzi, 2008) and the pharmacy White Paper *Pharmacy in England: building on strengths - delivering the future* (Departmnent of Health, 2008) were amongst the documents published. The presentations aimed to give the background and the OMG then discussed the implications. There were also local NHS agendas that were presented to the group. The modernised workforce was the focus of the stage two bid of the CETL. Hence much of the discussions were around the workforce being fit for purpose. The different professional needs and being a group with varied backgrounds, added depth to these conversations. In the discussions recorded in the OMG minutes, there appeared to be lengthy discussions around policy issues and the impact they had. In these discussions the OMG members represented both their own profession and organisation in the exchange. The value of these conversations was also noted by interview participants who felt that bringing together HE and

NHS in the discussions about policy documents helped them to see what impact these policies had across the sectors.

Date	Quote	Reference
28.10.2004	In line with the NHS Plan and the priorities for public sector workforce development set out in *The Future of Higher Education*, the purpose of the *CETL4HealthNE* will be: *To foster curriculum development for employability in the modernised health care service*	Stage two bid Part A.1
17.9.2008	[Name] updated the OMG about the Darzi Report. The discussion around the presentation included the recent regional publications 'Better Health, Fairer Health' and 'Safer Care North East'.	146.a.i

Time pressure

The meeting minutes gave added details of the time pressure that was felt by the OMG, both as a group and individuals (discussed earlier in Time pressure p.90). As a group, the pressure concerned the financial aspects of the collaboration, whereas the individual pressures were about the demands of being convenors. The OMG was responsible for the day to day working of the collaboration, whilst the advisory management group had much more of an overseer's role. The decisions about capital expenditure and finance rested upon the OMG. Even though the practicalities of the finances were dealt with mainly by the manager and directors, OMG members were the decision makers representing their organisations and workgroups. The timeframe given to use the money was the major source of pressure for the OMG, especially in the early years when most of the capital expenditure was due. There was also an application for extra funds from HEFCE that required speedy action by the group. Spending the capital expenditure had been slower than planned, due to organisational issues unrelated to CETL which also caused extra pressure. Not only were there deadlines for spending the money set by HEFCE, the collaboration had also been given deadlines for installing the equipment that was purchased. The OMG witnessed a series of delays in the installation of the video-conferencing equipment and a task that was well within the deadline when it started, only had been partially completed by the original deadline, because of reasons out of the OMGs control. As highlighted in Times Higher Education (2010) only a handful of the 74 CETLs funded had managed to secure a sustainable future after the end of the HEFCE funding. It could be that

the deadline for the capital expenditure was partly to blame for this, by causing money to be spent without assuring it was the best cause for action.

Date	Quote	Reference
12.10.2005	That there was a time constraint to spend the £2million Capital Spending money before March, 2007	17.i
11.1.2006	That the Capital Spending needs to be re-profiled as £2 million of the allocated money was supposed to be spent by January and only 60k has. This needs to be submitted to HEFCE by the end of January.	33.b.iii
13.9.2006	[Videoconferencing] There have been problems with some sites. The 'straight forward' sites should be getting their plasmas at the end of October or beginning of November.	64.ii.i

In addition to the external time pressure attributable to deadlines set by HEFCE, there was also internal pressure felt by the convenors. In the OMG minutes, there was evidence of the struggles to balance demands of the collaboration with other demands. Convenors struggled to find time to write bids for internal CETL funding by the given deadlines. Workgroups were encouraged to think about long term goals as well as quicker short term achievements, such as events or workshops that would stimulate more involvement. The pressure OMG was experiencing as a collective with HEFCE deadlines was replicated on the workgroup level with convenors feeling pressured to produce the bids. There was an understanding of the pressures convenors felt and it was agreed that initially the bids could be rough sketches of ideas and more details could be supplied later. Likewise, HEFCE showed understanding and was flexible with their deadlines on occasion. Towards the end of the collaboration, when it was apparent that CETL did not have the resources to continue in its current format, the convenors were asked to think about how to reorganise the groups. However, it was recorded in one of the discussions, that the convenors felt they had not had the time to think about restructuring.

Date	Quote	Reference
17.6.2009	[Name1] commented it is difficult to prepare the bids with the time frame available. [Name2] agreed and said that her group needs more time.	2.3

Responsibility

Central to the nature of collaboration, was the idea of shared responsibility. Each partner organisation was responsible for their engagement and again each person involved from that institution shared the responsibility.

The meeting minutes conveyed a sense of expectation on all of the members of the collaboration to take responsibility, but especially the members of the OMG. These responsibilities ranged from taking care of finance within their own institutions, to engaging more people with CETL activities and spreading the knowledge. On the financial side, there was only the occasional reminder, noted in the minutes, for people to complete forms in order to receive their funding, whereas much more time was spent on encouraging people to engage more people with the CETL.

As well as finding people who would be interested in getting involved in the CETL, members were also asked to find contacts within their organisations who could help with the installation of the equipment. Members were expected to share knowledge of what was happening in the CETL with their colleagues back in the home organisations. It was important to keep people up to date of what was being done, as well as engaging interested people in the activities that took place. If members would not share information about events that were taking place, or find people who wanted to become part of the CETL, then the collaboration would become static, like a stale old boys' or members only club. Having responsibility over what you were involved in added to the sense of ownership. In the meeting minutes, it was apparent that the members of the CETL were given responsibility over the collaboration and on the whole they embraced this opportunity.

Date	Quote	Reference
12.12.2007	Partners have been asked to nominate people with sufficient knowledge and expertise to join the new Evaluation Group	113.i.d
25.3.2009	Representatives were urged to ensure the right people within their organisations were kept aware of developments of CETL plans	176.b.i
23.9.2009	Partners will be asked to provide a list of people who they would like invited to this event.	24

Students

There was emphasis on the OMG attempting to engage students with the CETL, especially in the early years. In the feedback for the stage two proposal HEFCE had highlighted student engagement as a potential danger area. The OMG were aware of this and wanted to ensure meaningful student involvement. In the OMG meetings, the members exchanged ideas of how to engage students. Students were involved in CETL through the educational activities of

the workgroups, but the aim of engaging students was more to do with having a student voice within the collaboration. The group identified possible ways of engaging students and raising the profile amongst students, such as a newsletter aimed at students or a student reference group. One or two of the workgroups had the occasional student who was engaged for a while, but on the whole student involvement was non-existent. The OMG members had ideas of how to engage students; however meaningful student engagement in the workgroup levels was not achieved.

Date	Quote	Reference
28.10.2004	Increase student involvement in planning and evaluation	Stage two bid Part C 4.6.C2
19.7.2006	The only workgroup that has got student involvement at the moment is [workgroup name].	60.c.iii
13.9.2006	The Student Flyer is hoped to raise the CETL profile amongst students and get students involved both on a casual and more fixed basis.	63.d.i
	The idea of a CETL Student Forum was proposed which would involve students from the different Universities coming together to discuss what each other are doing.	63.d.iii
10.10.2007	Individual Partners have strong connections with students but this has not yet come through as strongly into the CETL. The CETL has not done as much with students as initially envisaged, and we need to work on this.	103.ii.e

Make up of the collaboration

The make up of the collaboration is examined through four different sub categories: focus and identity, structure, evaluation and workgroups. The framework of the collaboration was subject to continued discussions in the OMG meetings. Most of these discussions took place earlier on in the life of the collaboration, yet some of them carried all the way through its life. Naturally, once the collaboration was functional, there was no need to focus on the way the collaboration was set up, unless it required restructuring. The workgroups were discussed mainly over the first two years, whereas focus and identity were discussed both in the beginning of the collaboration, when the groups were discovering their collective identity, and towards the end of the five years, as they were establishing which aspects were worth retaining.

Focus and identity

Two different phases of finding focus and identity were visible in the meeting minutes. The first phase was in the beginning of the collaboration, the first year mainly. The group was discovering what it was about; how the aims proposed in the stage two bid were to be transformed into reality. The second phase was towards the end of the collaboration, the last year and half of its life, when the continuation of CETL was being discussed. The members were asked to define what made CETL unique, what would be the reason for continuing the collaboration. In the early days the members were reminded that the main focus of CETL was on health rather than getting carried away with other aspects that were related, but not central, such as social care. Workgroups were encouraged to remember the aims of the CETL when constructing their individual business plans. Even though the aims of the collaboration were detailed in the stage two bid, they still needed to be transposed into a practical working partnership. The course for the journey was set by the bid, but the specific route to take to the final destination was open for negotiation.

In the last two years of the collaboration the focus was on what made the collaboration unique. Those involved had enjoyed the experience of being part of a collaboration, yet there had to be more of a reason than that to continue. The OMG felt CETL had to have a unique contribution to the region that was not being fulfilled by any other organisation or initiative. There was also a strong belief that in order for CETL to survive, it needed to be seen to accomplish something that distinguished it in the region. In marketing terms – the CETL was looking for its unique selling point to enable others to see the relevance of what it was doing. It was suggested that workgroups may not be relevant in the reformed CETL, mainly for practical reason of costs associated with the way they were currently set up. Throughout this period, various options for funding were explored externally. In the end none of these materialised and a decision was made to finance the collaboration for a further two years in a reduced format with some non-HEFCE money. However even then, the OMG wanted to have a reason for continuing – the availability of money on its own was not a sufficient reason. The OMG was challenged to think what was the core, the essence of CETL, that partners wanted to retain and take forward. What the

OMG saw as the core will be discussed further in the next chapter in section Looking ahead - The revision phase on page 164.

Date	Quote	Reference
11.1.2006	That each work group should have specific reference to the aims of the CETL in their Business Plans.	33.b.i
13.2.2008	The CETL needs to think of what makes it unique and what will help it continue after HEFCE funding stops	123.i.e
24.2.2010	What is the CETL's unique value and what is the reason apart from funding to continue for two further years?	4

Structure

The suggested structure laid out in the stage two bid for the CETL was workgroups, management group, advisory board and regional stakeholder group. The regional stakeholder group was the only part of the proposed structure that was not implemented. The main structure for the collaboration was pre-set, but clarification was needed on practicalities such as the division of responsibilities. There were discussions about membership of the AMG and the OMG and the relationship of the AMG with the rest of the collaboration. The workgroups were intended to be a flat structure, but after some of the workgroups changed their focus, there was fear that the workgroups would become hierarchical. The OMG discussed this and felt that the fear was unfounded. The minutes suggest that the structure, that was planned before CETL started, was perceived to be working.

Date	Quote	Reference
27.7.2005	That the purpose of the Strategic Management (Advisory) Group was to keep the activities of the CETL in alignment to meet the Partners objectives.	37.2.ii
15.2.2006	That Operational Management membership should include the CETL Director, CETL Deputy Director, the CETL Manager, and workgroup convenors. It was agreed that workgroup convenors would also represent their partner organisations.	37.b.i

Evaluation

Evaluation was a bit of a conundrum in the CETL. There was much emphasis placed on the importance of evaluation, yet it did not appear as a priority. There was an evaluation group, but its role was advising workgroups on evaluation rather than undertaking any evaluation. Originally there was a proposed post for a research assistant, however due to changes in available funding it was converted into a PhD studentship instead. In addition to the PhD,

a critical friend was engaged to help with the evaluation. The workgroups were expected to evaluate their activities, yet there were reoccurring mentions of the groups struggling with lack of resources to collect data, let alone analyse it. A reoccurring theme in the OMG meetings concerned partners being encouraged to find people within their organisations who would be interested in becoming involved in the evaluation group.

As the collaboration progressed, it became apparent that more help was needed if meaningful evaluation of any of the activities was to be achieved. The OMG recognised the importance of publishing good quality research in order to secure future funding. There was some funding available external to CETL that enabled the collaboration to hire two part time research assistants to help with the evaluation about half way through the life of the collaboration. The lack of resources to undertake evaluation felt by the workgroups, was reflected in the recruitment of the researchers, one of the hiring criteria was finding people who were able to work independently, as the partners did not have time to advise them. The researchers did make a significant difference in the evaluation of the CETL projects. In hindsight, the OMG could have had a more coordinated focus on evaluation from the beginning. The evaluation group existed, but those in it struggled with competing priorities. There was no person or group whose sole focus was the evaluation. Having a person as part of the directorate team, whose responsibility was evaluation, could have helped to focus more on undertaking evaluation rather than merely discussing the importance of it.

Date	Quote	Reference
13.2.2008	The group agreed that research is currently a thin resource which needs to be worked on. [Name] addressed the importance of evaluation to secure potential funders in the future.	123.i.f
17.9.2008	The group discussed the importance of the CETL mapping what it does that adds value between and within organisations.	146.b.v
14.9.2005	That the group felt that it would be a good idea to have an evaluation of the day built into the event, and to invite the evaluation group to attend.	5.a.x

Workgroups

The workgroups were the physical expression of what the collaboration was aiming to do. The OMG was responsible for mobilising the workgroups. The minutes give an account of the process of how the groups were created. Recruitment and representation were the two main areas of focus in the

beginning. As described earlier (see Choosing a workgroup p.112), on the first away day, the attendees were split into six groups aligning with the proposed workgroups. After the away day, people were approached about becoming more involved in one of the workgroups.

OMG spent time discussing the representativeness of the groups. The aim was to have a good representation across both the partner organisations and disciplines in each group. The OMG gave a forum for the convenors to express their concern over lack of representation in their groups. Having all the partners represented in the OMG meant that those organisations not represented were aware of the issue and able to address it. This links back to the participants being expected to take responsibility, which was discussed in the context of collaboration earlier on in this chapter. Identifying a gap in representation by one of the partner organisations, meant that the representative of that organisation was expected to find a person who would fill the need.

Date	Quote	Reference
14.9.2005	That a letter would be sent to all invitees from the Away Day asking them which workgroup(s) they would most be interested in.	4.ix
15.11.2006	The membership of the new Healthcare Challenges Working Group needs to involve all Partners/Partnerships to ensure representation	68.ii
19.3.2008	The [name] workgroup are asking for more representation across all partners because the group is concerned of lacking membership […] The group still needs representation from [two HE partners]	132.a.i

From the minutes, it was possible to see that some groups had wider representation across the board than others. On occasions there were specific requests for more involvement from the medical schools or the SHA, but usually the need was expressed as a general need for more representation. Having all the partners represented was a natural desire in the collaboration, yet from the workgroups point of view, the need was for participants generally rather than for participants from specific organisations. This was also expressed in the interviews by participants of one of the smaller workgroups that struggled numerically, as discussed in chapter six (see The struggling group p.115).

To get the workgroups started, each was each asked to produce a business plan outlining their aims and focus. The OMG reviewed all the

business plans and offered their input on the content. It was suggested that the business plans would concentrate on two or three themes from the overall aims of the CETL. The process of the groups working through various drafts of the business plan was mapped in the OMG minutes. Business plans were seen as a way to help the groups identify the resources they needed. Also with the groups overlapping in some areas, the business plans helped when deciding which group would be most relevant for hosting or organising a specific event.

Date	Quote	Reference
26.102005	That [name] had contacted the three workgroups that had not yet submitted their draft Business Plans.	20.c.i
19.4.2006	The PBAL Workgroup overlaps with other Workgroups such IPE and so communication is paramount. When an event appears to fit into more than one Workgroup, distinguish which business plan the event applies to the most.	46.i.c

Summary

Communication was identified as one of the potential downfalls of the collaboration, and the OMG spent considerable time creating a communications strategy. The OMG felt it was important to keep the partners updated with what was happening. The CETL website, with internal and external interfaces and emailing tool, became central point for communications. Workgroups were responsible for updating their own sections. Overall communication worked well, apart from cross workgroup information sharing.

The voice of the partner organisations was valued. Repeatedly, the members were asked to find out their own organisations' views on specific issues. Partners also had a level of freedom in CETL, such as creating their own criteria for fellows based on a general description. Different organisational policies also presented the OMG challenges, for example when purchasing equipment. Most of the projects took place within workgroups and the OMG had little involvement with them beyond the occasional update.

The context of CETL was both national and local. On a national level, there were policy changes to follow, on a local level, there were decisions to make such as spending the capital expenditure. As a new policy document was released, the OMG had a presentation on the contents of the published document followed by discussions about the impact it had for the collaboration and the partners individually. The members of the OMG felt the pressure of

making decisions about the capital expenditure within the deadlines set by HEFCE. The pressure was increased in the early stages of the collaboration, when the OMG was both ensuring the establishment of workgroups and making decisions about expenditure. The external pressures of HEFCE deadlines were as much part of the context of the OMG, as were the internal pressures experienced by the convenors. Not all the OMG members were convenors, but all the convenors were OMG members, therefore they had a collective voice within a group to express their struggles.

As part of the ethos of the collaboration, the partner organisations were responsible for ensuring their engagement. The collaboration would go as far as its members input allowed. Examples of this responsibility were, sharing CETL news with their colleagues, or how members were being encouraged to find people within their organisations who could help. Student engagement in the CETL was not as successful as the OMG hoped. They discussed ways to engage students in the CETL, but despite numerous ideas, CETL did not achieve active student involvement.

CETL had two periods of defining its focus and identity. The first phase was in the beginning of the collaboration when the OMG was working out how to transfer the aims of the HEFCE proposal into practice. The second phase came towards the end of the CETL, when the group was talking about future and was trying to identify what made CETL unique and whether it would be worth retaining. The structure of the CETL was pre-set, yet there was some clarification as to membership and responsibilities that needed discussion in the OMG.

The OMG were responsible for initiating the workgroups. The aim for recruiting members for the workgroups, was to have representativeness across the partner organisations. The OMG also wanted representation across disciplines, but this was more of a desire than a directive. The OMG were responsible for ensuring the workgroups produced individual business plans. The plans were a way to differentiate the groups from each other as well as ensuring CETL aims were being met through the individual group aims.

The minutes offer a picture of how the collaboration grew and developed. The ideas from the stage two proposal, can be seen to influence the decisions that the group made, but it was also willing to take steps independently. The

OMG had a role of ensuring the collaboration worked towards achieving its aims. From the beginning, it was focused on ensuring that the communication between the partners was working. The OMG formed the hub for the collaboration and gave an insight into the totality of the collaboration for the convenors who attended it, enabling them to see the bigger picture beyond the aims of their own workgroup. Overall the OMG appeared to perform well and kept the collaboration on track, however the two areas where it could have improved were evaluation and student involvement. The failures of the OMG were failures of the whole collaboration, in the same way in which the successes of the OMG were successes of the whole collaboration.

Chapter 8. Lifecycle of a collaboration

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the lifecycle of the collaboration. It could be seen as evolution, a process of growth and development. The two main aspects covered in this chapter are the three phases in the development of the collaboration and the evolutionary cycle of collaboration. The terms lifecycle and evolution will be used in this chapter to try to capture and describe the on-going and evolving nature of the collaboration. There were distinguishable stages in the development of the collaboration. The phases in the lifecycle of the CETL were formation, mobilisation and revision. Each phase will be discussed in detail before the final section which focuses on the on-going evolutionary cycle of collaborations.

The chapter starts by examining the formation phase. The key features of this phase, establishing identity and getting people involved, are discussed. During the formation phase each workgroup discovered their identity and goals within the overall aims of the CETL. The second section focuses on the mobilisation phase. The emphasis during this phase was on converting the goals into action. It was characterised by a burst of activity. The uncertainty of the formation phase was changed into the excitement of forthcoming action. The next section introduces the revision phase. The main feature of this phase was focusing on the future of the collaboration. The projects and activity were still on-going; but the emphasis had shifted to examining the identity of the collaboration, to decide which aspects of the collaboration were worth retaining and which were not. The collaboration was redefining its essence and evaluating if it was worth sustaining. The final section of the chapter ties together the three phases by looking at collaboration as a process of evolution. This process is ever evolving with seeds from one collaboration carried onto and growing in the next. It presents the idea of relationships and connections that precede collaboration and new connections being formed during collaboration, both of which will carry on into future collaborations.

Starting out - The formation phase

There were two key things that defined the early phase of the collaboration; discovering the identity of the collaboration and attracting people who shared the vision of the group. It was important to create a shared identity and a vision of how to reach the goals of the group. Having clear goals and vision was important, but the group also needed people to carry that vision. Once the nuclei groups had formed an identity and vision, the focus shifted to engaging others who wanted to join in taking the vision forward.

Identity and focus

The process of discovering identity and focus were interlinked in the CETL. The identity was defined through the vision of the collaboration and determining ways of operationalizing this vision into meaningful action. The vision and focus of the collaboration have already been introduced in the previous chapter (see Focus and identity p.146). The emphasis here is on looking at the process of discovering identity as it relates to the lifecycle of the collaboration.

Originally people were drawn together by an idea which formed the basis for the developing identity of the collaboration. No collaboration starts in a vacuum of no identity. The idea might only have been a rough sketch of a direction, but it gave them a starting point. Examining the very early stages of where the foundations of CETL identity were formed, through the initial ideas for the first bid, goes beyond the remit of this PhD. However, it was possible to discover traces of that process from the stage two bid to HEFCE, and comments made by interviewees who had been involved from early stages or had been part of the projects that preceded CETL. There was a sense of CETL carrying on previous partnerships. When HEFFCE announced the call for bids, the collaboration was seen as a way to build on the connections that had been made previously, in order to take the working relationships further.

Date	Quote	Reference
28.10.2004	Built upon the strong foundation of our previous partnership working demonstrated in our Stage 1 Proposal, *CETL4HealthNE* will be established by a 'core' group of empowered academics and clinicians, drawn from the partner organisations	Stage two bid part A.3

Consequently, at the point where this study starts to examine the collaboration, CETL was not a group without a focus. The aims had been expounded in the bid to HEFCE. Yet the people involved had to go through a process of transforming the written aims into practice, translating what was written in the bid into a collective identity and plan. The process of finding identity was about discovering the shared vision and values that the group had before they can start making plans for action. Similarly, previous research has highlighted the need for a shared identity in order to form a functioning collaboration (Henneman *et al.*, 1995). In the second meeting of the OMG, it was highlighted that the collaboration had no clear identity. The group was discussing how to increase publicity and make a wider audience aware of the CETL. They realised that before they could do that, they needed to define clearly the focus and identity of the collaboration. They planned to hold a logo competition open to graphic design students. The OMG wanted the logo to portray a journey towards common ground but before the competition could be held, the group wanted to be clear of the aims of the logo. They had recognition of the differences between the partner organisations and also the need to have a joint goal that went beyond these differences.

Date	Quote	Reference
11.5.2005	That something [logo] was needed that transmits the vision of the CETL, and conveys a journey towards common ground for all partners… That the CETL was the vehicle to move towards 'something', and that the group needs to brand the 'something'.	15.5

The bid helped to define the identity of the collaboration, yet there was an awareness of the limits the bid brought with it. The collaboration needed to define what they were doing, within the parameters they were given in the bid to HEFCE that gained the funding. The overall aim of the CETL limited the identity, yet there was flexibility within the methods that were used. An important part of the formation phase of the collaboration was the members thinking collectively about the best way to achieve the goals they were given. This collective thinking process reflects the essential role the development of collaborative structure and goals in the formalization process of a collaboration (Norris-Tirrel and Clay, 2010). The theoretical model proposed by Norris-Tirrel and Clay (2010) gave a starting point for the model proposed in this research. The model proposed here

will be discussed further and compared to other models in the discussion chapter (see Lifecycle of a collaboration p.182). Further, the discovery of identity took place both on the level of the whole collaboration and within the individual workgroups. They had been given an outline of an identity, almost like the DNA that a child receives from their parents – how they are going to look predetermined by their genes. Yet even though the direction for the group was given in the bid, the decisions that they made about projects influenced the outward expression of the group.

> *I mean obviously the CETL had goals which it has to achieve and these had been laid down in the initial bid […] therefore I wouldn't expect it to be completely responsive in terms of overall goals although detailed tactics may well change from time to time [Interview 3, HE, L26-27;31-32]*

For many of the participants there was a frustration over how long it took for the collaboration to define itself, to find its feet. Walsh and Kahn (2010) touched upon this when they discussed the nature of collaboration needing to be both emergent and planned in order to be successful. Participants recognised the need for flexibility, or being emergent, when the collaboration was forming. Yet they used words like 'woolly' and 'fuzzy' to describe their experiences of the early stages of the collaboration. These experiences were similar to those that Linden (2002) recorded in the courtship phase. The first of the four stages he defined, where people were keen to know what the goal was, why it mattered and why they were involved. People become involved in CETL because they saw the potential the collaboration had to change things. Yet they struggled with the on-going discussions without much action. However in hindsight, they felt that letting the collective identity and vision develop from the bottom up had been the right thing to do, allowing people to take ownership of the collaboration. Participants wished that more directive action had taken place early on to shorten the formation phase, they also acknowledged that if someone had been directive, others would have perceived it as a takeover. Reflecting this in the meeting minutes, there was a conscious effort on behalf of the lead organisation not to be too directive in order to allow the other partner organisations' views to be heard.

Source	Quote	Reference
23.11.2005 OMG	That [lead organisation] would have a 'hands off' approach and were asking for the Partners' for suggestions on how it might work, so that a concrete proposal could be written and be presented to the Advisory Group for consideration.	28.iii
Interview 2 HE	*I mean I was very, very uncomfortable with it in the early days but again that's down to me and the way I like to work and not having a very structured idea of what it was going to look like*	L319-321
Interview 11 NHS	*I think you've got to start messy and allow the form to emerge from the discussion and the collaborative in many ways because you know if you want to take people with you, you got, they've got to have contributed to the process*	L412-415

Getting people on board

Like the goals, the partner organisations were predetermined in the bid. Yet there were still partners to be found. The organisations had signed up to the collaboration, but they still needed to find the individuals who would become involved on a practical level. In the stage two bid, the funding for 16 CETL fellows was outlined. The idea of the fellowships was to reward and recognise individuals within organisations and give them an opportunity to take things forward. The fellow posts were initially for two years and thereafter renewable every year. The plan was that the fellows would be the hub for CETL activity, with the funding freeing them up from their day job, whilst rewarding them for their achievements at the same time. The vision was to attract involvement beyond the 16 keen individuals across the nine partner organisations. The OMG had a central role in getting people engaged in the collaboration. They organised the first away day a few months into the funded existence of the collaboration. For most people, the away day was the beginning of their CETL involvement. Each partner organisation compiled a list of attendees for the away day and highlighted those who could help to facilitate discussions during the day. The away day was an opportunity to both kick start the process of defining the identity of the collaboration, as well as involving people in it.

Date	Quote	Reference
27.4.2005	These teams [set to develop the workgroups] would start to be identified and set up as part of the CETL Away Day	4
11.5.2005	[Name] asked for the partners to send back their list of attendees as soon as possible, and also asked for the Key People from the partners to be identified to facilitate workgroups	13

The away day was the main event for engaging people in the CETL. Each partner referred the people they thought were the best suited from their organisation to be involved. Out of the discussions, during the away day, the foundations of the workgroups were formed, even though there were people who joined the groups later on. Also at a later stage, some people changed work groups to reduce cross over with others from their organisation. There was similarity in the formation phase with the first stage of Kezar's (2005) three phase model of collaboration. The main focus of the first phase was about finding committed individuals to engage in the collaboration. However, what the first phase of her model lacked, was the process of defining identity that was evident in the early life of the CETL. The workgroups had a dual focus of activity in the early days. They were compiling the business plan for the group, whilst ensuring they had enough people involved. Finding people who wanted to be involved and harnessing their interests, defined the formation phase. On the first away day, people were asked to indicate their areas of interest which were then used to form the groups.

> *I went to the first meeting in [place] when they were going to, when we met and we had to go to [place] and then you were put into your groups which you were gonna, what you were interested in [Interview 4, NHS, L19-21]*

If groups felt they did not have enough members, they raised their concerns with the OMG and each partner representative would then go back to their own organisation to identify people who could become involved in that particular group. Balanced representation has been found to be one of the markers of effective collaborations (Buse and Harmer, 2007). CETL itself did not engage in direct recruitment as such. The method used was attracting people through the partner organisations. Getting the partners involved ensured the involvement of the local people who were best for the job. As mentioned previously, some workgroups were underrepresented (see sections Workgroup size p.114 and The struggling group p.115), but since the recruitment was through the partners there was not much the CETL as a whole could do apart from encouraging members from underrepresented organisations to seek suitable people. The participants felt the responsibility of ensuring their organisations were represented and engaged in the collaboration (see

Contributing to the group p.116). As found in previous research, individuals represented both themselves and their organisation (Bartunek *et al.*, 1996; Richter *et al.*, 2005) however some participants were more aware of being representatives of their organisation than others. Even though CETL itself did not recruit, many of the workgroups organised events to recruit new members and showcase their topic early on in the collaboration. The low number of members in some of the groups was not such an issue in the early days when much of the focus was on designing a business plan. But it became more of an issue when the collaboration moved to the next phase, the mobilisation.

Date	Quote	Reference
12.10.2005	That it would be useful to have representation from all Partners on this group, and that the core group should emerge from the workshops and other events being organised by the Workgroup.	13.a.v
11.1.2006	That [name] was concerned that there might be gaps in representation from [N's organisation]. It was agreed that the work group membership would be examined.	34.ii

Gathering steam - The mobilisation phase

The second phase in the collaboration's life was marked with a sudden burst of action. During the formation phase, the emphasis was on defining the identity and recruiting people, with occasional events taking place to raise awareness of the collaboration and invite more people to become involved in it. The transition from formation to mobilisation was gradual. CETL consisted of six different workgroups which functioned independently. There was no definitive point when the collaboration moved on from one stage to the next. Even in a collaboration with a simpler structure, there would be overlap between the phases. The mobilisation phase was defined by the emphasis being on planning and undertaking activities rather than discussing the structural issues of the collaboration. This phase will be examined through three different aspects: growing involvement, action and organisational adjustments.

Growing involvement

As the collaboration grew and strengthened in identity, so did people's involvement in it. Participants found it easier to be involved in the collaboration once they had something concrete to engage in. With the increasing level of activity within the workgroups, the groups with fewer members became more

aware of their need for involving more people. During the formation phase, additional people would have been helpful, but in the mobilisation phase they were a necessity. Once again, the OMG was the place for the workgroups to raise their concerns over the lack of engagement in their groups.

Date	Quote	Reference
18.3.2008	The [Name] workgroup are asking for more representation across all partners because the group is concerned of lacking membership.	132.a.ii

In addition to people starting to feel more involved, there were also individuals who left the collaboration due to changes in their job roles. The individuals themselves felt they were abandoning the collaboration; however their leaving offered someone else in their organisation an opportunity to become more involved, as well as giving someone else within their workgroup the chance to take on some of the responsibility they had held. The pattern of people leaving and joining once the collaboration reaches an action phase has also been noted in existing models of collaborative development (Norris-Tirrel and Clay, 2010). The replacements joining during the mobilisation phase had a markedly different experience of getting involved than those who had been involved since the formation phase. Two of the interviewees got involved during the mobilisation phase. For them, the collaboration was primarily about the action, whereas interviewees who had been involved since the formation phase also focused on the process the collaboration had been through, in addition to the action. These participants still experienced the uncertainty that others had in the early days of the collaboration. However their experience was more individual, discovering their own position in the collaboration, rather than the whole collaboration discovering its collective identity. The newcomers had the challenge of getting accustomed to both their workgroup and what was taking place across the wider collaboration – for those involved from the beginning it had been a joint, gradual journey of discovery. The experience of the newcomers reflects theories on group dynamics, where members of a new group defines its norm and identity like in the formation phase in CETL where new members to an existing group are required to conform to the norms that already exist in the group (Stangor, 2004).

Source	Quote	Reference
18.3.2008 OMG	[Name] is resigning from the OMG group with effect from the next meeting. [Name] will have discussions with [their] workgroup before announcing what will happen with [their] position as [the] convenor.	133.c.i
Interview 6 HE	*I'm still trying to find out what's, what else is happening with the CETL being quite new to it*	L151-152

Action

The most marked feature of the second phase was the burst of action taking place across the collaboration. A fitting metaphor to describe this would be dormant seeds waiting for suitable conditions to start growing. It was as if the seeds for action had rested during the formation phase and once the climate was ready for action there were little seedlings emerging everywhere. Some were annuals, some biennials and some perennials. Each had their own function but also added a splas of colour and texture to the landscape of collaboration. Participants felt that CETL enabled them to take things forward within their organisations. On some occasions this meant that CETL speeded up the process and enabled the organisations to reach targets quicker than they would have done without the collaboration. On other occasions the collaboration helped to achieve something that the organisation could not have done alone. The fellowships freed up participants' time and gave them time to focus on the agenda of their workgroup.

> *I think we probably would have been doing some of it anyway you know, it's just, enhanced it really, it's sort of enabled us to do it quicker and […] we wouldn't have been able to do some of the things that we've done if it wasn't for the CETL [Interview 4, NHS, L433-437]*

The participants' desire was to take things forward, both within their field and organisations. During the formation phase they struggled with the lack of action, regardless of recognising the importance of the slow beginning. Once the collaboration moved onto this phase, participants felt they were finally doing what they had actually signed up for. In a similar vein Linden (2002) highlight the importance of the collaboration taking action through starting projects and initiatives once the identity and focus had been laid down. CETL offered a mechanism or vehicle for taking agendas and projects forwards. The finance CETL brought with it enabled partners to invest in people and free up their time.

Yet, not all the fellows were freed up equally (see Time pressure p.90 and Financial benefits and equipment p.124). As mentioned in the previous chapters, there was freedom within CETL for the partners and the workgroups (see Organisational issues p.134). The aim of the collaboration was to bring change into the curriculum and ultimately to produce practitioners fit for purpose. Yet within the aim, each workgroup had their own strategy and each partner organisation was given the freedom to do things in a way they preferred on an organisational level. On one hand there was flexibility throughout the partners, on the other hand there was a shared vision that went across the workgroups and the management groups. The way in which the strategic vision was threaded through all levels of the organisation was perceived to distinguish CETL from other initiatives where the strategy was much more top down approach rather than something that was shared across the whole initiative.

> *All of the various layers are involved in some element of strategy, because you are trying to, you know, the workgroups, you are trying to influence undergraduate curriculum and there is strategic element to that [Interview 14, NHS, L36-39]*

In the meetings the increase of action was noticeable. The difference from the formation phase to the mobilisation phase was the shift of focus from constructing the business plans to turning the business plans into action. The workgroup activity was evident in the minutes through updates on projects and equipment purchases from the capital funding. In addition to being kept up to date with what was happening in the groups, the OMG also dealt with the financial requests from the workgroups. Each workgroup had an annual budget, any funding needs beyond this had to be presented to the OMG. The finance requests were a small part of the discussions, the emphasis was mostly on general updates on what the groups were doing. Occasionally the OMG also offered advice to the workgroups on areas they felt could be improved, needed more focus or had been overlooked. The OMG was also kept updated on the equipment that had been purchased and how it was starting to be utilised.

Date	Quote	Reference
14.11.2007	Dr Companion has delivered the first set of PDAs to Stockton Campus where they are being used by second year students. Fifth year students at James Cook University are	111.v.a

	expecting their Dr Companion chips in the New Year.	

Organisational adjustments

From the organisational point of view, the major challenge during the mobilisation phase was keeping track of all the changes taking place, both at an organisational level and amongst the members. The directorate of the CETL (the director, the deputy director and the manager) was seen to play a significant role in keeping the collaboration on course during the changes. The participants shared a strong conviction of the importance of the directorate in maintaining the momentum of the collaboration when changes happened that could impact the collaboration. Even without the changes, when things were going smoothly, the participants felt the necessity to have central person, in this case the manager, who acted as a contact point between the partner organisations and the workgroups. Similarly Flora and Hirt (2010) found an independent administration centre to be helpful in large collaborations by bringing balance and reducing competition. Participants saw the directorate role as bringing continuity into the collaboration. Part of this continuity was through the security of having the finances in place to replace staff in the directorate if needed, rather than having to rely on good will. In a sense, it was not the person as much as what they were able to bring to the role that was valued.

> *Again somebody with her talents and her abilities to, who pulls it all together, really is, it's very instrumental in keeping tabs on all the things that are going on [Interview 8, HE, L422-424]*

With the expected life of the collaboration being at least five years, it was clear that there would be changes as time went on. More changes happened during the mobilisation phase than the formation phase. However, the increase was more to do with the inevitability of time passing and changes happening naturally, than with the changing phases of the collaboration. A major change that took place on the organisational level, was the merging of the two strategic health authorities. The changes brought uncertainty to the participants. Even if the participants felt it was difficult for them personally to sustain the momentum with changes going on around them, knowing that there was a central point to the CETL, through the directorate, acting like an anchor point helped them to

see continuity in the collaboration. Kezar (2005) noted the importance of committed individuals whilst changes, such as funding cuts are taking place to ensure the continuity of the collaboration.

The OMG was not immune to the changes and new members joined the group as others left to take on new roles. For the remaining members the new representatives were a breath of fresh air, and because the momentum was behind the collaboration, these changes strengthened rather than weakened the collaboration. As a group, the OMG were responsible for the decisions of the purchase and instalment of the equipment with the capital funding. Once the decisions of what to purchase had been made there were challenges and changes they faced along the way before the equipment was in place. The decisions, in principle, were made during the formation phase, but the process of transforming the decisions into practice happened in the mobilisation phase.

Source	Quote	Reference
13.2.2008 OMG	When the CETL tendered out for the lecture capture system there were two companies on the scene; Apreso and Lectopia. The CETL chose Lectopia because it offered more in terms of functionality and scalability. Since then Lectopia has been bought out by Apreso.	124.e
Interview 12, HE	*I think the management of it has been continuous and the management style's been continuous so yes I think the coming and going has added to it rather than detracted really*	L147-149
Interview 10, HE	*I suppose it's inevitable when you got a workgroup that is going to work over such a prolonged period of time that you are going to have changes in personnel*	131-133

Looking ahead - The revision phase

The third phase in the life of the CETL was the revision phase. During this phase the main focus shifted from the projects to the future of the collaboration. The revision was about deciding on the future direction of the collaboration. The projects were still taking place, but the main emphasis now was on what aspect of the collaboration was worth retaining and if so, how would it be best done. In the previous chapter this was touched upon when describing the redefining of identity the collaboration went through. The collaboration knew its identity, but they now had to decide which aspect of the collaboration was worth taking forwards. Some workgroup activities had been embedded on an institutional level, but there were also other projects that required the involvement of more than one partner. The OMG discussions were

about exit/continuation strategy. The shared conviction was that there needed to be a reason to continue the collaboration. If the consensus was to pursue continued partnership, then the rationale behind it had to be clear. The central question was: 'which aspect, if any, was worth taking forwards or sustaining?' In the discussions about continuation, it was possible to separate two different aspects to the collaboration that were considered; the first was the mechanism CETL offered for communication across partners and the second was the specific projects within workgroups.

The revision phase is examined through three different aspects: reality check, weighting up the options and embedding. The first step of the revision phase was a reality check, mapping out the realistic expectations and limitations for future. Once the parameters affecting the future were known, the next step was weighing up the different options available. The final part of this section will focus on embedding. However it is worth remembering that embedding and weighing up the options are concurrent not sequential processes.

Reality check

The need for a clear strategy going beyond the duration of the original collaboration was highlighted in the specific feedback received by the vice chancellors on the CETL proposals. Yet it was side-lined during the formation phase when the emphasis of the OMG and the workgroups was on getting projects up and running. The expectation on the workgroups was that the activities undertaken in the groups should become embedded into organisations over the course of the collaboration. After the initial OMG meeting it was not until February 2008, nearly three years later, that continuation strategy was again explicitly mentioned in the meeting minutes. This does not mean that the directorate were not thinking about the future, but as a group the OMG did not focus on the continuation strategy until that point. It could be argued that it would have been impossible for the OMG to start planning the continuation before that point. The collaboration as a collective entity was evolving and developing. Before the identity of collaboration was clear and what it had achieved was known, it would have been unrealistic to be planning its future. The collaboration had to grow to a point where they could see what was worth taking forwards and what was not, rather than deciding something was worth

retaining before it had even taken place. During the final phase of their model of collaborative development Norris-Tirrel and Clay (2010) highlight redesigning the processes and structure of the collaboration deliberately as part of the renewing of a collaboration. Similar clarification of purpose was taking place in CETL during the revision phase.

Source	Quote	Reference
13.2.2008	Director asked partners what they envisaged as a successful continuation of the CETL collaboration once HEFCE funding stopped.	123.i.a

When the discussion on the continuation agenda started, the partners were asked what they perceived to be the value of CETL and how they envisaged the future of the partnership. The need for funding was the reality that limited the discussions about the continuation. The OMG members and the interview participants shared a sense of realism about the financial limitations. It was clear that funding was needed to continue the collaboration. Fellows were recognised as the least sustainable aspect of the collaboration due to the costs associated with them, yet continuing the collaboration on a shoestring was not an option either. The exchange of commodities is seen as part the process of maintaining collaborations (Lingard *et al.*, 2004), yet in CETL the majority of the commodities in terms of finance had come from HEFCE. Hence rather than the partner organisations taking on the role of exchanging commodities, they were looking for another outside body to continue HEFCE's role even if it was at reduced levels. The dialogue between the workgroups, the OMG and the directorate was visible in the minutes. The workgroups' views were sought on their reorganisation. The reality was that the current model was unsustainable without extra funding. The overriding sense from the interviews was that the mechanism of the collaboration was more important than the projects themselves. The projects and workgroups were secondary to the vehicle CETL had created and it was this vehicle that the participants saw as worth retaining. The choice of retaining the vehicle rather than projects is slightly paradoxical when reflecting back to the participants experience of the collaboration and their frustration in the early days when it was forming and their delight once the projects started and they felt they could get into something. However without the mechanism there may not be any future projects and retaining the projects

without the mechanism would not be a guarantee for future action. The conclusion of the reality check was that there was a future but it required funding. Along with the need for funding, another priority was continuing meaningful engagement with the SHA.

Source	Quote	Reference
Interview 11 NHS	*The workstream might change, and you know in a sense that matters less, it's more about having a vehicle and the relationships and […] the mechanism to do it and then the work[…] will come out of that, so I'm not particularly concerned about the individual projects*	L334-338
22.4.2009	There are two areas of concern for the CETL: the need for strategic engagement with the SHA; and the need for core funding.	182

Weighting up the options

Once the decision to look for a continuation strategy, rather than exit strategy, was made the next step was to seek available opportunities for taking CETL forwards. There was brief consideration of the idea of CETL becoming the hosts for the clinical governance support team's website which was quickly rejected as unsuitable. There were two sources of potential finance, the first was NHS Education North East (NHS ENE) and the second was Health Innovation and Education Cluster (HIEC). The NHS ENE was seen as a good continuation strategy. The possibility of the directorate being hosted within the NHS ENE whilst the workgroups was supported by the partners was discussed. However the OMG members expressed wariness with pursuing this option. Whilst the collaboration needed the money, they felt that it was an option with strings attached. One of the concerns was the lack of power the partner organisations would have if CETL became part of NHS ENE. The concerns about the future under NHS ENE were irrelevant because the feedback from the NHS ENE was a clear no as they felt CETL would have more overlap with the HIEC.

Source	Quote	Reference
23.4.2008	The AMG asked if NHS Education North East should be involved in the continuation of the CETL. […]This is certainly a good vehicle for the exit / continuation strategy but the CETL need to reflect on this.	136.b.ii
14.1.2009	We need to get NHS_ENE funding with all of the risks identified.	165.b.xx
22.4.2009	Informally, the CETL has been told that the Research & Innovation Directorate of NHS ENE will become a far more defined function than originally planned […] and that the CETL may well be better located within a future Health Innovation and Education Cluster.	182

It could be said that the collaboration had wasted a year by pursuing a dead end with NHS ENE. Yet it gave them good experience on deciding what they wanted out of a funding partnership enabling them to be better prepared the next time. All the partner organisations of the CETL were involved, independently of the collaboration, in putting together the bid for HIEC in the North East. Regardless of the partners being involved already, CETL felt that they had much to offer to the HIEC and what it was trying to achieve. The consensus of the OMG was that it would be good if HIEC subsumed the best of CETL and even if that was not to be the case, the collaboration could act as a translational partner. The bid for the HIEC was successful and CETL became one of the partners involved in it, however it did not become the all inclusive continuation strategy the OMG had thought it could be.

Source	Quote	Reference
17.6.2009	[Name] commented that he understood that all the Partners were represented at the meeting. It was a structured meeting which started with various presentations. Each major institution attended with senior level representatives	2.1
24.2.2010	If HIEC subsumes most of what we do as a CETL great! If not, the HIEC might still need us as a translational network partner. Discussion was really to think about why we will need to continue - the intention is to draw our lessons into the HIEC one way or another.	4

There were non-HEFCE funds that CETL had, that would enable two more years of activity. Yet, the reasoning of the management groups was that just because the money was there, it was not a sufficient reason to use it to continue for another two years. Some of what CETL had attained regionally in building relationships had enabled the HIEC to start a step ahead from where CETL began. One of the reasons for collaborations ending is if the partners perceive the collaboration has gone as far as it could (Norris-Tirrel and Clay, 2010). However it was felt that there was still scope for more in CETL than just

acting as a stepping stone for another regional partnership. Hence the decision was to continue for a further two years with the approval of the partners. The continuation also needed to be negotiated with the partners who agreed to the collaboration continuing their activities of educational innovation in line with the funding that was available. Even though the fellows had been recognised as the least sustainable part of CETL, the decision was made to fund them and the directorate for a further two years with an added emphasis on supporting the workgroups so that involvement would require minimum effort from the members. The revision phase in CETL was about weighing up the options, whether to continue or not and if so, how. Having the security of the two years of extra funding enabled the CETL to pursue the bid with HIEC, knowing that if it fell through, they still had another option available to them. Using the extra funding was comparable to starting another cycle in the life of the collaboration. A new business plan was to be constructed and more action was taking place.

Source	Quote	Reference
15.7.2009	The Advisory Group has given approval in principle for CETL funding from non-HEFCE resources to be used to continue CETL activities up to July 2012.	3.2
24.2.2010	The points from partners were to keep the Directorate as close to current capacity as possible and funding to partners in respect of Fellows time might be at a flat rate. This was agreed with AMG.	4

Embedding

There was an underlying expectation that the projects themselves should become embedded in the partner organisations' life if they were perceived to enhance the curriculum. As part of the revision phase, the workgroups assessed which aspect of their work was worth retaining, and had the possibility of being embedded, so that it would become part of the partner organisations life. Embedding projects should have been an on-going activity in the collaboration. Previous research has highlighted the importance of partners defining a shared meaning of what they mean by sustainability early on in the partnership (Sharma and Kearins, 2010). Yet as the collaboration advanced much more focus was placed on getting the projects started than examining how they could be embedded. Each workgroup was responsible for embedding its own projects and there were differences in how they had managed to do this. Workgroups that were considered more mainstream in the beginning, such as

IPE, found it easier to embed projects as there was a higher level of awareness within the organisations about their agenda. For the less familiar workgroups, it was more of a challenge to embed projects as they first had to raise the level of awareness of their agenda. Also, in the interviews, some of the participants expressed a view that some projects, such as practice-based approaches to learning, which require involvement of both the educational organisation and the practice partner, were impossible for individual organisations to retain or embed and should be continued collaboratively.

Source	Quote	Reference
Stage two bid 28.10.2004	We intend to develop an approach in which we can together constantly generate, implement, embed and evaluate innovation and change in key education processes, so that the curriculum becomes largely self renewing, and at the cutting edge of effective 21st century healthcare practice.	Part C.1
14.9.2005	That all Workgroups were not to worry about an end date for activities, as what we are doing will become embedded in our work, and not just for the 5 years of the CETL.	5.a.vii

Participants saw embedding as a way of being able to assess the value of the CETL collaboration long term. If they could see evidence of the projects in practice five, ten years after the collaboration it would have been value for money. This viewpoint reflects expression by Linden (2002) who aptly said “collaboration is means, not an end” (p.175). However there is an aspect of the collaboration that is difficult to define in monetary terms. If a decision had to be made about whether CETL delivered value for money, the answer would have to be both yes and no. In terms of the financial input, there probably would have been more concrete and physical outputs if the funding had been split between individual projects. Yet, there was a network of connections and relationships that was formed. The impact of those relationships over a ten to fifteen year period is impossible to measure. Despite that, the increased cohesion between the individuals and organisations can only be seen as a positive outcome that will have impact on the curriculum for years to come. Even if all projects were not embedded as well as they could have been, or even not at all as was in some cases, the foundations for future collaborative working were embedded into the organisations.

The three phases of collaboration with their defining features are summarized in Table 14 on the next page. The experience of participants changed as the phases of the collaboration advanced. The initial phase of the

collaboration was defined by a sense of uncertainty, not having a clear and defined idea of what the collaboration was about and aiming to accomplish. Once the collaboration moved to the mobilisation phase the participants shared a sense of excitement. They were finally able to be part of what they had envisioned themselves doing when they joined the collaboration. During the final phase, there was a sense of shared contemplation by those involved. They were evaluating what had been done and whether the collaboration had the need or potential to be continued.

Phase	**Formation**	**Mobilisation**	**Revision**
Features	Forming identity	Transforming aims to action	Embedding what is being done
	Attracting people	Getting projects started	Revaluating the future
Mood	Uncertainty	Excitement	Contemplation
Key tasks	Define goals and aims	Starting projects	Take account of what worked and what did not
	Create shared vision	Seek to widen engagement	
	Find individuals who share the vision to become involved	Knowledge transfer and creation	Plan for future, scout opportunities
	Establish ways of effective communication	Create opportunities to engage people socially	Find ways for the work to be taken forwards internally
	Create a clear structure for the collaboration	Allow freedom for spin-off projects	Seek ways to keep up the connections

Table 14 The key features of the phases in the lifecycle of a collaboration

Collaboration as evolutionary cycle

Continuing with the idea of the foundations for future work that the collaboration created; the life of collaboration could be seen to be an on-going cyclical movement. It could be argued that collaboration never ends, because the relationships will continue even if during the revision phase the decision is made to terminate the original collaboration. Whenever members of the original collaboration meet with the intent of working together, the signs of the previous working relationships are detectable in their communications through the shared

history, making the formation phase of the next collaboration easier and probably shorter.

The relationships form the basis for a series of new collaborations at different levels, some may be short, some may be extensive, but all have some roots in the CETL. And likewise, CETL had roots in other previous regional partnerships that had gone before it. Figure 4 below attempts to capture this on-going cycle of collaborative work. For the lack of space, there are only three cycles presented, but in theory the cycle of collaborations is infinite. Tracing the roots of relationships through a series of projects, partnerships and collaborations is almost like exploring family trees and finding connections with unknown relatives. There are unexpected links and connections that give the partners a history together even if they had not personally worked together before. Thomson and Perry (2006) touch on an aspect on this when they describe collaborations being formed through a series of formal and informal relationships and connections. Any collaboration has the potential to be carried forward to future collaborations and passing on some of the collective knowledge and relational capital that has been gained. Each collaboration creates its own DNA and part of this genetic make-up will be included in the subsequent collaborations' DNA through the members.

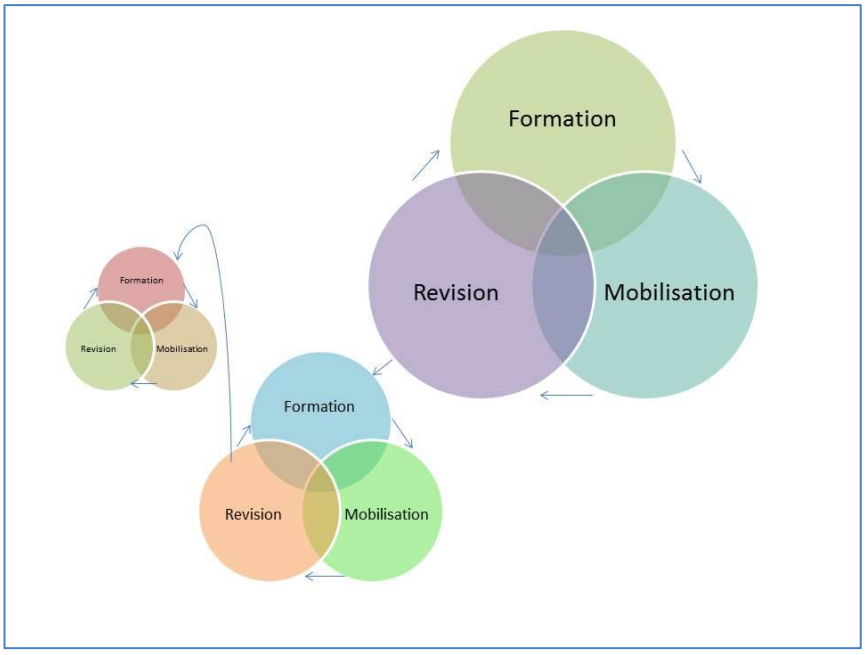


Figure 4 The on-going nature of collaborations as represented by collaborational cycles

There is an evolutionary cycle of collaborations, where the roots of a collaboration can be linked to a previous one. Additionally each collaboration undergoes an individual cycle of evolution. It is possible to see the life of the CETL as a growing and developing entity advancing from one stage to another through the interactions of its members. CETL was not a fixed, static object; it grew and evolved with time. The beginning of this process can be traced back to early tentative discussions between the people involved in drafting the first bid. It grew from there to the next bid, engaging more people to be involved. Once the funding was secured, the collaboration started to gather speed. These steps formed different parts of the foundation stage, each having their own significance and value. The discussions before were the foundations for the discussions to come. Like evolution in the natural world, evolution of collaboration is a long process. At times it is difficult to notice a change from one phase of the collaboration to another as the change is gradual and the phases overlap. Seeing the totality of the processes is possible when reflecting back on how the collaboration has grown. Norris-Tirrel and Clay (2010) conceptualised the lifecycle of a collaboration as an evolutionary process to give practical understanding of the developing nature of collaboration to those involved in managing it. However, her model focused on evolution of a single collaboration, whereas in CETL there were traces of a wider circle of evolution taking place, increasing the interconnectedness in the region. There were on-going connections that had been built in the region before CETL that formed the roots of the collaboration. Strong conviction of the impact the new relationships forged through CETL would have on future partnerships, strongly suggesting that the evolutionary cycle goes beyond an individual collaboration.

The evolution of collaboration can be an unpredictable process. In CETL, there were issues on a larger scale, like organisational changes or shifts in political views, in addition to everyday work issues of the members, that all had a cumulative effect on the collaboration. The participants wanted faster pace in the early stages of the collaboration, but when reflecting back they recognised the need for allowing the collaboration to develop at its own pace. The process of collaboration is not dictated by strict formulas, even if they often follow similar patterns (Stangor, 2004). Being able to adapt to changes, both expected and unexpected, strengthened the collaboration. The collaboration needs to know its

goal, but also be willing to try alternative ways of reaching it if the original plan fails.

Summary

During the formation phase, when the collaboration was starting out, the emphasis was on discovering the identity of the collaboration, what it stood for and what it was aiming to achieve. Equally important in this phase was attracting more people to become involved in the collaboration. The identity and attracting people were linked. It was easier to recruit people once the identity was clear, but it was also helpful to have the input from the new members to reinforce the collective identity of the collaboration. In CETL, the responsibility given to the partners was reflected in the recruitment of people. Each organisation was encouraged to seek people internally to become involved. As the workgroups became more functional they also held events to engage more members, but the main method of attracting participants was through partners' recommendations. The formation phase of the collaboration was about forming solid foundations for future work and testing the ground to see if the need and scope for the collaboration existed.

Once the collaboration had defined itself, it was time to start moving forward. The focus of the mobilisation phase was on transforming the plans into action. The discussions and planning that took place during the formation phase were transformed into projects and initiatives. Some people were more nominally involved during the formation phase, but once the workgroups were starting to be active, they become more involved. The distinction, between the first and second phase was the shift from discussions to action. However this is not to belittle the importance of continued dialogue during the second phase, rather to emphasize the main characteristic of each phase. The dialogue was on-going but the focus of it changed. It became more about the practicalities of the projects than the identity of the workgroup.

Through the action the members felt more involved. There was something concrete they could associate with their involvement. Another feature of the mobilisation phase was the changes taking place. There were members who moved on with their careers and involvement in the collaboration did not fit with their new role. Hence, new people became involved in the collaboration to

replace them. There were also adjustments for the collaboration as a whole that organisational changes created. The way the directorate was set up gave a sense of strength and continuity in midst of the changes that took place. Changes can be expected in any lengthy collaboration and it was evident in CETL that once the collaboration was functional, it was easier to react to them.

The final phase in the life of the CETL was the revision phase. The projects were still on-going and the workgroups were actively taking their agenda forward whilst in the background there were increasing discussions about what would happen once the funding ended. The collaboration underwent a reality check, debating whether they should look for an exit strategy or a continuation strategy. The consensus was that CETL had created a vehicle for educational innovation across the partners in the region which was worth retaining. The collaboration decided to carry on their work but they required funding to continue. There was a minimum requirement of finances needed to support the partnership, even if it was in a reduced format. The main concern for everyone was retaining the mechanism for future work rather than supporting individual projects. As part of the revision, the way projects were embedded was also under scrutiny. Some workgroups had managed this better than others. However, those involved felt that the relationships that had been formed were one of the major achievements of CETL. If the impact of CETL was measured in financial terms it would be difficult to say if its influence was proportional to the resources it received. The value of the connections that were made during the collaboration that will become foundational for future work is impossible to measure.

The relationships are part of the DNA of a collaboration. They get passed on to any subsequent collaboration its members become involved in. There is a relational capital and practical knowledge that the collaboration has formed, enabling future projects to start one step ahead. When collaboration ends it passes on some of its legacy, whether connections or knowledge, to future partnerships. Every collaboration nurtures potential for future collaborations as part of the evolutionary cycle of collaborations. This makes it harder to measure whether collaboration was value for money, because its legacy has the potential to continue beyond the original boundaries and even the original disciplines of the collaboration.

Chapter 9. Discussion

This study aimed to examine the experience of individuals' involvement in a collaboration as well as exploring the lifecycle and development of collaboration. This final chapter of the thesis will review the study and its contributions to wider literature. The first part of the chapter focuses on the main findings of the study and relates them to existing literature. The chapter will then focus on how well the research aims and objectives were met, the generalisability of the findings and areas that could have been improved. Following this, some reflections on the research journey are provided. The chapter will close by drawing attention to areas where further research is needed as well as offering recommendations for future collaborative projects.

Discussing the main findings

The significance of the findings of this study is magnified by the growing agenda for collaboration in the HE and other public sectors as highlighted in the introduction chapter. This study offers valuable insights into collaborations in HE settings as well as wider a field. The focus here is on three aspects of collaborations, which have emerged from the findings, each illustrating a different viewpoint of the experience of involvement in collaboration. These areas each highlight an essential part of the participants' experiences of involvement in CETL and also offer insight for future collaborative projects and research on collaboration. The areas discussed are the balancing act, the central role of relationships and the lifecycle of collaborations.

Balancing act

Participants' experiences of being part of the collaboration were best described as a balancing act. For the participants the competing tensions of the collaboration combined with the pressures of their work life were being balanced against the benefits they could perceive from their involvement in the collaboration. Rather than letting any individual factor dominate their experience participants weighed up the totality of their collaborative experience. As Huxam and Hibbert (2008) noted, in a collaboration everything is interlinked, separating one part from another is difficult with the mix of individual, communal and

organisational motives that play a part. Participants' experience of being in CETL supports this, separating the individual factors that influenced the participants' experiences of involvement was difficult for participants as they were often interlinked. Focusing on factors such as time pressure, organisational differences, opportunities to network and material benefits singularly does not give an accurate portrayal of the way the participants weighed up their involvement. For the participants it was the totality of the different factors that mattered. El Ansari and Phillips (2001b) argued that in collaborations participants need to perceive a favourable balance on the scales to continue their involvement, experiencing negative balance would discourage involvement. The findings of this study expand on this suggesting that if the participants perceive potential positive benefits in the future it can compensates for negative balance they are experiencing currently. Further El Ansari and Phillips (2001a) proposed that there would be a point where the costs and benefits converged leading individuals and organisations to reconsider their continued involvement in the collaboration. However differing from their findings, in CETL the point of convergence did not mean disengagement as the participants had a long term view of the costs and benefits and as long as they perceived positive longer term benefits they were willing to endure short term costs. Thomson and Perry (2006) highlighted the undue focus in research on antecedents of what makes a good collaboration. Yet in the light of inter-linkedness noted by Huxam and Hibbert (2008) and the notion of balancing act presented by this study, it appears that research on collaboration would be best to focus on the totality of the factors influencing collaborations and exploring the relationships between them rather than attempting to single out individual factors.

The balancing act participants performed was based on weighing up the totality of the factors with a long term view. Yet, there were individual factors, noted by the participants, that other researchers have also found to play a part in collaborative involvement. The tension between job role and the collaborative involvement that participants felt has been found in previous research examining a sustained interprofessional education initiative (Freeth, 2001). Cultural differences are also seen as a challenge in collaborative involvement (Selsky and Parker, 2005) and should be taken into account when planning a

collaboration (Walsh and Jones, 2005). In CETL the cultural differences formed part of the tension participants felt (See Organisational cultures, p.101). However in the document analysis and interviews there was little evidence of a focused effort on discovering and bridging organisational differences. This is possibly because in CETL the total configuration of the collaboration was new but the partners were often known to each other. There was a certain level of previous relationships to build on so that the need to bridge differences was not as pressing as it might have been in completely new collaborations with no previous connections between the partners.

The findings of this study are in line with previous research suggesting that there needs to be perceivable benefits of collaboration for those involved (Matlay, 2000). The participants' narrative of their experience was 'its hard work but absolutely worth it'. There was an element of perseverance that made the gains seem sweeter; being willing to put up with inconveniences because of expected benefits in the future. However, as the recruitment for the interviews took place once the collaboration had been functioning for a while, it is possible that those who did not perceive the collaboration to be worth pursuing had already left it, thus giving a one sided view. Furthermore, there is no evidence to confirm whether the participants received the benefits they expected in the course of the collaboration or not. It is possible that at the end of the collaboration some participants felt that the pressure they had endured had not being outweighed by benefits.

In a collaboration a participant represents their organisation and there was evidence that participants also took this into account when weighing up the cost-benefit relationship for the organisation as part of the balancing act. The wider context itself was not necessarily a barrier nor encourager for collaboration. Yet, it played a part in the way an individual perceived their collaborative experience. The importance of recognising the setting of collaborations was previously noted by Osborne (2006) who drew attention to the need to be aware of the wider context of the collaboration. I believe that the presentation of the point of convergence for the costs and benefits by El Ansari and Phillips (2001a) offers a starting point for examining the motivation for participants' involvement but it needs to be expanded to account for the multiple

levels affecting the cost benefit relationship through the context and the organisational dynamics as suggested by the findings of this study.

The central role of relationships

Recognising the importance of relationships in collaboration is vital for a meaningful collaboration to take place. This was highlighted by Walsh and Kahn (2010) who believed that to form a strong collaboration there needs to be well established social vehicles which underpin the collaboration. The findings of this study support further the importance that relationships have in collaborations. The relationships people had formed were central to participants' experiences of the collaboration even to the point where people became involved in the collaboration because of previous productive working relationships with others now involved in the collaboration.

Martin-Rodriguez et al. (2005) defined three levels of relationships in a collaboration which affect the success of a collaboration: interpersonal, within organisation and between organisation. These three levels were also noticeable in CETL. On the interpersonal level, participants were getting to know each other and building trust. Within organisation relationships were central to participants' collaborative experience. Often participants had been asked to become involved by someone else in the organisation; there was a personal connection point that started their involvement. The importance of the social aspect of collaborations was further highlighted by the way in which the people participants were in frequent contact with in their organisations were perceived to know more about the collaboration than those who they met infrequently. This reinforced the sense participants had that those close to them knew and understood CETL better (see section Knowledge and understanding of CETL p.97). A challenge for any collaboration is how to widen their influence beyond the network of contacts each individual has?

Occasionally the line between interpersonal interaction and interorganisational interaction was hazy. A participant is both an individual and a representative of their own organisation (Bartunek et al., 1996; Richter et al., 2005). In CETL the participants, especially in the early days, were not sure if they were just attending a meeting as themselves or if they were officially representing their organisation. As the collaboration developed the participants

became more comfortable with the role of being involved as both themselves and the representative of their organisation. There is a shift of characteristics when organisations collaborate rather than individuals (Walsh and Kahn, 2010). An individual is likely to know what they are capable of and what they can commit to, but as a representative of an organisation, the individual experiences the tension of wanting to engage but not wanting to commit their organisation to something it would be unable to deliver. The commitment and the resources of the organisation need to be expressed so that the participants know their organisation's stance and are able to represent it meaningfully.

On the organisational level the collaboration created a platform for increased communication between the partner organisations. Through continued interaction over the years, the organisations became more aware of what each was doing. Participants felt that, enabling the HE NHS relationship to take place outside the usual framework of commissioning and the power dynamics attached to it, had opened a channel for meaningful communication. As Munro and Russell (2007) note, collaboration across the practice and education spheres can increase familiarity with practice on one side and give an opportunity to influence education on the other. In CETL, it was perceived to improve relationship by each sector becoming more aware of what the other was doing. Knowing more of what each organisation does, increased the trust between the organisations, which is known to be essential for successful collaboration (Evans and Wolf, 2005).

The improved relations were reflected in the way that participants perceived the communication between HE and NHS to be a constructive two way exchange rather than one way criticism. The NHS participants found it fascinating to be involved in the process of bringing change into the curriculum. Even though the participants had perceived the relationships between the HE and the NHS organisations to be good in the region before the CETL, there were signs that the collaboration had improved them further. The influence participants perceived CETL to have had, highlights the need to find ways of bringing HE and NHS together as equal partners in an open dialogue. Huzzard et al. (2010) drew attention to how the involvement of practice in creation of knowledge is a new phenomenon and emphasized the role that forging relationships and ways of communicating with each other has in that process.

The participants' experiences of NHS and HE working together on curriculum change in CETL suggest that those in NHS organisations should have an integral role in the process of educating future health professionals, not just act as the location of the placements and remaining otherwise detached from the process.

Hardy et al. (2005) proposed a theoretical model of collaboration where the identity of collaboration is created through a series of conversations. Likewise Keyton et al. (2008) defined communication as the essence of collaboration. However, as touched upon in the literature review chapter, I believe the core of collaboration to be wider than just communication; it is the totality of the social interaction that takes place in collaboration. Communication, which conversations are part of, does have a central role, but it cannot be solely used as a method of explaining the multiple levels in which interaction takes place in collaboration. As seen throughout the findings chapters, the context of the collaboration plays a vital part in the individual's experience of being involved in collaboration. It is the totality of the social interaction that can be used to examine the process of collaboration. Without taking into account the context of the interaction, it is impossible to build a picture of what collaboration is as actions and words are to be understood in their context (Blantern and Anderson-Wallace, 2006). The challenges and the encouragers of individuals' participation all get their value from the interaction an individual has with others. Collaboration is a socially constructed entity which would not exist without the social interaction that takes place between the individuals and between the organisations. Organisations are based on relational nuclei (Gergen, 2001). Communication on its own does not create collaboration; it is the social interaction and the context in which it takes place that produces what the collaboration is.

The findings suggested that the relationships that were created during the CETL would act as foundations for future projects and collaborations. However it is possible that the potential for future connections is over-estimated. In the interviews the participants shared examples of spin-off projects that had taken place because of the connections they had made in CETL but because there is no data collected after the end of the HEFCE funded existence it is not clear whether the connections would continue beyond the structured existence

and how many of the relationships that were made would turn into a future collaboration. For the participants, previous fruitful relationships had encouraged them to seek engagement in the CETL, based on that it is possible to assume that the participants would seek to do the same again if they had perceived their relationships to be fruitful. The spin-off projects and desire to seek ways of continuing working relationships suggests that the potential for future connections is a reasonable conclusion to make. Yet, it is possible that the participants who were interviewed during the mobilisation phase were over optimistic about the potential of their connections and without having data from the period after the end of the collaboration it is difficult to say to what degree their expectations were met.

Lifecycle of a collaboration

The findings of this study support the idea that collaborations have continuity within them. There is a lifecycle of collaborations with an inheritance passed from one collaboration to another through its members. Each collaboration is unique. Yet, often there is a desire to find a universal model for creating a successful collaboration. There are similar stages that all collaborations go through but each has their unique setting which adds its own characteristics to the collaboration. There are many models of the lifecycle of the collaboration. The classic model was introduced by Tuckman (1965) who looked at the stages of small group development. The stages he proposed were forming, storming, norming and performing, at a later stage there was a fifth stage of adjourning added to the model (Tuckman and Jensen, 1977). The first model specifically created for inter-organisational collaboration was created by Ring and Van de Ven (1994). This model had three phases: negotiation, commitment and implementation. The model was cyclical and iterative rather than linear, which started to capture the change from a modern view of organisations as linear, rational entities to a postmodern view of relational and interrelated processes. Building on this Kezar (2005) focused on the process of collaboration in higher education settings and devised another three stage model involving phases of building commitment, commitment and sustaining.

The phases that were visible in the lifecycle of the CETL are comparable to the phases depicted by Kezar (2005), yet the terms formation, mobilisation

and revision capture better the essence of each phase and I have therefore used them to replace building commitment, commitment and sustaining respectively. The findings of this study support the hypothetical model of collaboration as a lifecycle by Norris-Tirrel and Clay (2010) which was proposed based on existing collaborative literature rather than exploring an actual collaboration. Even though their proposed model had a different number of phases than this study, the overall idea of the process of collaboration as lifecycle which was the significant feature of their hypothesis, is supported by these findings. Furthermore, had this study included the periods before and after the HEFCE funding, it is possible that there would have been further phases that were identifiable. Below in Table 15**Error! Reference source not found.** the different models of collaborative development are detailed and how the phases of this model relate to the previous models.

Reference	**Phases in the model**				
Norris-Tirrel, 2010	Exploration	Formation	Growth	Maturity	Ending
Kezar, 2005	Building commitment	Commitment	Sustaining		
Linden, 2004	Courtship	Getting serious	Commitment	Leaving a legacy	
Ring and Van de Ven, 1994	Negotiation	Commitment	Execution	Assessment may lead to new cycle of collaboration	
Tuckman and Jensen, 1977	Forming	Storming	Norming	Performing	Adjourning
Lindsey 2013 (present study)	Formation	Mobilisation	Revision		
Contributions of the present study	*Dual focus on identity and recruitment*	*Action gives meaning to the collaboration*	*Continuous collaboration through connections*		

Table 15 Models of collaborative development

There were overlaps between the phases in the lifecycle of collaboration. This could be the reason why some models have five or more stages and others have fewer. A possibility is that the models with more phases treat the overlap period as a phase by itself. However, if collaborations are perceived as a process, then having an overlap between the phases emphasises the process more than having them separate as overlap highlights the sense of movement from one phase to the next. There was not a definite point of change when the CETL as a whole moved from formation to mobilisation, it was a gradual

progression. Especially as each workgroup acted like a small collaboration within the larger collaboration with each developing at its own speed. Furthermore, in CETL, the participants perceived the collaboration to be progressing forwards rather than being a pendulum between progress and retreating backwards. The speed in which the collaboration progressed changed but the direction of travel stayed the same – growing, developing and going forwards.

The CETL, along with all the other Centres of Excellence funded by HEFCE, had sustainability in its aims by default through the aims HEFCE had for the Centres of Excellence as a collective. Yet beyond a brief mention of 'continuation strategy' in one of the early meetings, the future of the CETL was not mentioned in the OMG meeting minutes until the collaboration was very much in the mobilisation phase. However, in the light of the findings of this study, I would argue that before being able to hold meaningful discussions about the future of a collaboration there needs to be a clear identity and action plan. In a similar vein Connolly *et al.* (2007) note that for a sustainable collaborative future, all partners need to be able to perceive the benefits of participation. Discussing the future during the formation phase appears a bit rushed as all the collaboration has at that stage is the potential benefits, it does not offer anything concrete. If the discussions for the future take place in the mobilisation phase, then the partners should have concrete reference points for what the benefits are and what they are aiming to take forward.

The emphasis in the discussions in the OMG was very much on finding a funding source, yet one of the aims HEFCE expected of the Centres of Excellence was embedding what was being done. In CETL the advice from the OMG to the workgroups was not to worry about embedding but focus on getting projects started – if the project was beneficial it would become embedded. As a group the OMG focused on ensuring there was a future for the collaboration whereas embedding the projects was very much seen as the responsibility of the workgroups and those involved in the projects. The decision to focus on retaining the mechanism rather than the projects during the revision phase (see Reality check p.165) also meant that the emphasis was on finding further funding rather than finding ways to embed and make the projects sustainable. Embedding the mechanism of CETL did not appear to be an option that was

considered. It might not even have been a feasible option to attempt the embedding of the mechanism as it would have required major commitment from the partners as well as attempting to tie down and define something that was based on relationships across the partner organisations. Exploring the notion of embeddedness may be an area where a second interview on a later stage of the collaboration would have been beneficial. The interviews took place during the mobilisation phase when the projects were starting to be implemented and the participants were not that focused on embedding yet. As the workgroups were entrusted with embedding it was not discussed in such a detail in the OMG meetings. In hindsight, second interview would have deepened the understanding of the revision phase by adding the workgroups side of the revision phase to the story in more detail through the participants.

There is noticeable change on the emphasis that is put on the projects between the mobilisation phase and the revision phase. The change in emphasis could be caused by the different data used. The interviews were conducted during the mobilisation phase and therefore data from both the interviews and document analysis was used to construct a sketch of the mobilisation phase. However the data about the revision phase is mainly from the document analysis. Participants did forecast forwards about what they thought would happen in the future of the collaboration but this was their speculation, rather than accounting their actual experiences. From the interviews there appeared to be a sense that the participants perceived the mechanism to be more valuable than the projects. The discussions in the OMG during the revision phase reflect the views participants shared in the interviews in giving prevalence to the mechanism over the projects. It could be argued that with the collaboration committing itself to the structure rather than the particulars it was ensuring future with more options available to it whereas if the collaboration had committed itself to certain projects, branching out to new areas could have been more challenging to justify in terms of the existing projects the collaboration was committed to support Another simple explanation for the shift in emphasis could be that the projects were like learning to ride a bike. When you first start it is wobbly an you need to focus on it. Once you are more confident, you do it without thinking about it. The mobilisation phase was the wobbly phase for the projects, they were getting started and gathering

speed. By the revision phase, the projects were established to such a degree that they functioned without much emphasis needed on them.

During the revision phase there was an expressed need for finances for continuation. However, the emphasis was on finding a funder, rather than looking for ways to generate income. HEFCE expressed very explicitly a desire for the Centres of Excellence to become embedded. Yet, in the discussions during the revision phase, there seemed to be a hidden narrative of academia expecting outside funding rather than looking for ways to fund themselves. On the one hand, it is possible to say that CETL should have been targeting its efforts to discovering innovative solutions that had the potential to bring them income. On the other hand it could be argued that it is wrong to expect health related CETL to become self-sufficient. In media, music or even engineering it is relatively easy to see ways how an income could be generated through innovations or training. However, the health care sector on the whole is reliant on outside funding for its existence. If the future employers need funding, then it is expected that the educators of the future employees would also be reliant on external funding.

Furthermore, CETL's search for external finance could be explained in terms of the commodities of financial support coming from HEFCE, rather than being exchanged between the partners. Lingard *et al.* (2004) see the exchange of commodities as vital for sustained collaboration. In CETL the partners were not used to exchanging concrete commodities such as financial support rather the collaboration between the partner organisations was based on exchange of abstract commodities such as networking and sharing information. As a consequence the partners were not used to looking for material support from each other. Hence the focus was on seeking external finance. This seems to suggest that if collaboration has external funding, it would be beneficial if the partners still committed finances to the collaboration in order to build up a sense of financial responsibility so that when the external funding finishes the partners are still committed to the cause.

The need of external funding could have also been possibly lessened if the funding from HEFCE had reduced in decrees rather than stopped at once. The finance from HEFCE could have been structured so that it would have decreased in steps, thus encouraging and easing the partner organisations into

taking gradually increasing role in funding the partnership. Stepping down the funding gradually appears as a good option for encouraging the partners to take responsibility over the financial side of the collaboration without burdening them too suddenly with the totality of it. It could be argued that the partner organisations knew that the HEFCE funding was only for five years, therefore the end of it should not be such a surprise to them. However, knowing that something is going to take place is not the same as being prepared for the reality of it. The gradually decreased funding could have acted like a period of preparation for the partners, allowing them to take some responsibility without bearing the full consequences straight away. However when looking at funding methods in wider academic setting, not just projects, Frolich *et al.* (2010) concluded that different funding mechanisms generate similar results. This would suggest that gradually reduced funding may potentially have the same results than non-graded funding but only ending at slightly different point in time.

The HEFCE funding gave the partner organisations an equal standing in the collaboration. However, if the partner organisations had decided to fund the continuing partnership themselves, it is very likely that some of the partner organisations would have contributed more than others financially. Previous research has shown the importance of minimising the power inequalities (Selsky and Parker, 2005). Even with the best intentions, it is very likely that over a period of time the unequally portioned contributions would have lead to unequally shared power in the CETL. Looking for external funding, took away the risk of power inequalities between the partners as the material input was coming from outside, thus giving all the partners equal say. Yet, it can only be speculated whether the combination of the partner organisations gradually increasing their financial support for the collaboration and looking for external funding would have been the best option for the future. Having some external funding would have meant that the potential for differences in the financial support from the partner organisations would be lessened as the external funding took away some of the pressure to finance the partnership.

The evolution of collaboration

Even if partner organisations decide that it is time to end the collaboration, there is a legacy that will be carried forwards through the relationships that were formed. In one model of a development of collaboration, the final phase is actually called leaving a legacy to emphasize the impact of collaborations that go beyond their limits (Linden, 2002). The relationships have the potential for future connections within them. Perhaps this is especially so in an area like the north east of England, with the limited number of universities and NHS trusts within a relatively confined area geographically. This can increase the likelihood that even if people move jobs they will stay within the region and hence connections still have the potential to turn into future partnerships. There is a continuation of relationships even if the collaboration formally ends (Walsh and Kahn, 2010). The relationships that have been shaped in a collaboration form important networks for potential future collaborations. However it is arguable that collaborations could leave behind a legacy of negative relationships discouraging those who were involved from wanting to engage in another collaborative in the future if it involved people they had had a strained experienced with in the past. In CETL, the relationships participants had formed were one of the encouragers of their involvement. In contrast if participants perceived the relationships in a collaboration to be strained or fractured it would possibly effect their enjoyment of the current collaboration as well as making them less likely to want to engage in a future collaboration. Even though there was no evidence in the present data, it is possible that a collaboration could leave behind a legacy of negative relationships. If a collaboration fails to cultivate the relationships between the members or if there is unpleasant personal chemistry it is very likely that those involved would not seek further opportunities to work together. Quite contrary, they would probably go out of their way to avoid opportunities that would bring them together with those individuals again. Relationships can be seen as the greatest potential or asset of any collaboration. If these relationships become strained or fractured, it has the potential to affect the functioning of the whole collaboration. In CETL those involved reported that they enjoyed each others' company and were encouraged to continue their involvement because of this (see People make it p.93). When involvement in a collaboration is viewed as a

balancing act, the strained relationships could potentially tip the balance too much on the negative side, thus discouraging involvement.

Each individual collaboration goes through a process of evolution in its lifecycle through growing trust and increased relationships. However there is a wider evolutionary cycle of collaboration that all collaborations belong to. The participants bring with them the DNA of the previous collaborations they have been part of, the connections they made and the knowledge they gained. The relationships participants made play an important part in this wider evolutionary cycle. In CETL, some of the members had worked together before, this enabled their workgroup to start a step ahead of the others as they already had joint history. This also made it easier for others joining the group to get involved as there was a level of trust that was carried on from the past. The evidence of the lifecycle of collaborations is mainly suggestive as the study did not continue to follow the connections that had been made. However there was evidence of previous collaborations behind CETL and also spin-off projects that had their roots in connection that had been made in the CETL. To study the lifecycle of collaborations extensively would require a longitudinal approach exploring the connections and different partnerships as well as mapping out the links from one partnership to another which unfortunately was beyond the scope and timeframe of this study.

As Hibbert and Huxham (2010) point out, identifying common traditions in the partners, both organisations and individuals help to build foundations for a common future. Flexibility and willingness to adapt are important parts of the process of collaboration (Kezar, 2006) and if some of the partners know each other from the past it can help them to build for the future. This view resonated strongly with the participants who felt that CETL had created foundations for future work in the region by forging relationships and building trust amongst the individuals and the organisations. The sense of continuity of connections links with Burke's (2006) conclusion of perceiving the purchaser-provider relationships in nurse education to be dynamic by nature and requiring on-going support. Relationships often have a long term aspect to them, even if they are initially started within a framework of a fixed length project.

CETL and the current changes in the NHS

The growing agenda for collaboration in both NHS and HE organisations was highlighted in the introduction. This has been made even more important with the structural changes in the NHS that are being implemented. The current reorganisation of the NHS as set out by the coalition government calls for increased partnership between the different aspects of care provision (Department of Health, 2010). Further it states that the government is committed to promoting

> *"Biomedical Research Centres and Units, Academic Health Science Centres and Collaborations for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care, to develop research and to unlock synergies between research, education and patient care" (Department of Health, 2010, p. 24).*

The clear intention of this statement is to encourage partnerships between HE and the NHS in educating health professionals to improve patient care. Involvement in CETL could be seen to have prepared the participants for the forthcoming changes. The emphasis of the proposed changes is on encouraging partnerships at a local level between NHS, public health, social care and other local providers. Members of CETL may have the advantage of local connections across the sector that they created through CETL. It is probable that the connections individuals made through CETL will enable their organisations to adjust more quickly through the existence of the work-based trust that had been created through CETL. It is conceivable that the early stages of the shift to the new model of NHS commissioning and care will be 'messy' and unstructured, yet those who experienced similar uncertainty, on a smaller scale, during the formation phase of CETL, may be able to assure others through their own experiences.

Examining this study

This study has presented a portrait of what involvement in CETL4healthNE was like for its members and explored the context of this experience. The life of the collaboration was examined in depth through meeting minutes and interviews. This section aims to review the study, the way it was conducted and relevance of the findings. First I will look at the aims and

objectives of the study and examine how well each of them were met, second I will focus on areas that could have been improved and finally I will examine the generalisability of the findings.

Meeting the research aims and objectives

Aim 1. *To explore individuals' experience of a collaboration and their perceptions of the process and outcomes of a collaboration in an educational setting*. The first aim was the heart and main focus of the study. On the whole this aim was covered well. The interviews highlighted the participants' perception that involvement was like a balancing act. Participants' perceptions of the process of collaboration helped to build the model of the lifecycle of collaboration together with the data from the document analysis. The only part of the first aim that was not fully met was exploring the participants' perceptions on the outcomes of the collaboration. The word outcome was chosen because of my naivety about the nature of collaborations when constructing the aims and objectives. In hindsight a better concept to use would have been expected legacy of the collaboration. Exploring the expected legacy would have probably been done better if the right wording had been chosen in the beginning. The differentiation between outcome and legacy is in their focus. With legacy the focus would have been more on the on-going aspect of the collaboration, such as the relationships that were made. In contrast having an 'outcome' as the measure, the focus would have been on what had been achieved rather than what the collaboration was leaving behind. However if perceived legacy had been an aim, then the methods should have included interviews towards the end of the collaboration which would have added valuable data. Yet this only became an option through the changed timeframes of the PhD due to choosing to complete the study part time after returning from maternity leave. When the study was originally designed it was expected to be completed before the end of the HEFCE funded existence of CETL.

Aim 2. *To explore changes in the collaborative experience over a period of time and the possible factors affecting change.* The second aim of the research was not fully met. Participants spoke of the early days of their involvement and their current experience and their expectations of future experiences, however these were projections rather than actual accounts. At

the time of data collection it was thought that not much would be gained from a second interview within such a short interval (six months) as there was no specific point in the life of the collaboration within this timeframe and often longitudinal interviews aim to interview the subject before and after a significant point. Looking back, especially as the model of the lifecycle emerged from the document analysis, in another six months the collaboration would have been in the early phase of the revision stage and therefore participants experiences would have probably have been different. Also a concern for not having sufficient time for analysis and writing up was partly behind the rationale for not pursuing a second interview. A second interview would have potentially increased the data saturation specifically for the revision phase in the lifecycle of the collaboration, as currently the evidence to support the revision phase is from the documentary analysis and participants' forecasts of what would happen.

Objective 1. *To ascertain the individuals' perceptions of what collaboration is and how they see themselves as part of the collaboration.* This objective was fully met. Participants' views on the collaboration were largely shaped by the context of the collaboration as they perceived it. Central to how they perceived the collaboration and themselves were the organisational interaction and differences as well as recognising the collaboration as a developing and growing entity. Where the individual saw themselves in relation to the collaboration was very much through their workgroup.

Objective 2. *To ascertain the development and change in aspirations over a period of time and to establish the possible causes for the changes*. This objective was not met, mainly because participants struggled to separate their own expectations and aspirations from those of the collaboration and their organisations. However rather than being a failure in achieving an objective it is a marker for an area that needs to be explored more; how the participants' aspirations link to the aims of the collaboration and how the aims of the collaborations can encourage those involved to aspire to achieve more?

Objective 3. *To establish the impact of the context of collaboration on the individual, focusing specifically on the organisational context including their place of work, their workgroup and the wider collaboration.* This objective was met fully. The study was able to build a comprehensive picture of the context of

the collaboration as perceived by the participants and examined the role of their place of work, workgroup and the wider collaboration.

Objective 4. *To construct a sketch of the CETL collaboration formed from the perceptions of the individuals involved*. This objective was met through forming the model of the development of collaboration a lifecycle and describing the three phases in the development of the lifecycle. When this objective was initially created the idea behind it was to construct a physical sketch on a piece of paper of what the collaboration was like linking different areas of the collaboration to each other, however from the findings it was more appropriate to create a model of the development of collaboration rather than try to oversimplify it to a diagram.

Objective 5. *To establish the role individuals attribute the organisational context to have on their own aspirations and experience of the collaboration.* This aim was partly met. As with objective two, ascertaining individual aspirations was challenging and therefore it was not possible to explore the role organisational context had on them. It is possible that the participants' aspirations could have been explored if other methods, such as narrative interviews focusing on career and job motivation, had been employed but this may have led the focus of the study to shift more towards participants' career expectations and motivations than being involved in a collaboration. The role of organisational context on the participants' experience of involvement however was explored and the study was able to look at the relationship between the context and the experience.

Room for improvement

This research has built a picture of the experience of involvement in collaboration and explored the changing nature of collaboration over time. However, reflecting back, there are areas that could have been improved or even done differently in the design of the study. One area that could be criticised is the process of sampling, particularly for the use of the CETL manager to help to identify potential participants. The manager could have been subjective and favoured those who would give positive accounts of the collaboration, thus reflecting CETL in a good light and excluding potentially critical or biased candidates. However, the inclusion of members with both high

and low involvement and the drawing up of a long list of people from which the people were chosen for recruitment, meant that the manager could not be sure that their favoured candidate would be recruited although it is possible that more critical CETL members were excluded.

The use of levels of involvement as sampling criteria did not elicit two groups with differing experiences. Whether a participant was of high or low involvement, their experience on the whole was the same. The most poignant differences appeared to be with convenors and non-convenors which would suggest that focusing on the different roles in the collaboration would have been a more beneficial option. One of the reasons for choosing high and low participation as a sampling criterion, was the acknowledged need to have motivated stakeholders in a collaboration (Holdsworth *et al.*, 1995). Hence the assumption was made that high involvement participants would be more motivated than low involvement participants. In hindsight focusing on the different roles would have possibly enabled me to elicit more differences in the accounts of experience of involvement.

The document analysis of the study could also have been broadened by including a wider range of documents in the study. The analysis of the OMG minutes gave a good picture of the collaboration and it offered a good defined set of data to study because of the number of meetings and the quality of the minutes that had been taken. However studying the AMG minutes as well as the workgroup minutes and even the accompanying documents could have offered a deeper level of understanding of the intricacies of the collaboration. The OMG minutes were focused upon because of time reasons and because the OMG had the most involvement in the running of the collaboration. Including other data sets could have increased the saturation of data by offering a different viewpoint to issues that were present in the OMG minutes. Choosing to focus on the OMG minutes was the right decision in terms of available time but if the time had allowed it, including the other documents in the study could have given another level of insight into the experience of being part of a collaboration and the life of the collaboration.

It could be argued that the study should have employed a longitudinal approach to fully capture the lifecycle of the collaboration. This was achieved to a degree through the use of meeting minutes but in hindsight using

ethnographic methods and observing the workgroup meetings, the development of the various projects and the OMG meetings at regular intervals would have presented a rich source of data to study both the experience of involvement as well as the evolution of collaboration further. If I had had my epistemological 'revelation' earlier on, it would have definitely been a course I would have pursued even with the potential complications of the process of applying for ethical approval for it. As it was, I attended some of the meetings, merely as an observer to get a flavour for what the collaboration was doing but was not able to use it as a data as it was not part of my proposal to the ethics committee. Also at the point when the study was designed I was planning to return from maternity leave full time which would have only given a year to engage in data collection and analysis with a year for writing up. However, as mentioned earlier, I returned part time which meant I could have potentially followed the collaboration for a longer time. However the upside of this missed opportunity for collecting ethnographic data is that through being part time I was able to access meeting minutes for the whole HEFCE funded duration of the collaboration.

Longitudinal interviews could have been another methodological option. Yet as mentioned in the methods section (see section Updated proposal p.57) the participants both reflected back and forecasted forwards in their interviews. There were no significant transition points in the life of the collaboration during the data collection that would have given an anchor point for conducting longitudinal interviews before and after. Hindsight, combined with the findings seems to suggest that ethnographic methods, combined with longitudinal interviews around the transition points in the life of the collaboration would help to build the most comprehensive picture of what the experience of involvement in collaboration was like and how it changed from one phase to another.

Even though there were no definite time points that would have justified the use of longitudinal interviews in the way they are commonly used, conducting follow up interviews or even just some interviews with a few key informants could have been beneficial. Interviews, even if they were more like snapshots at a point of time rather than in depth interviews could have allowed some of the data categories to be deepened. The main area where the depth of data is not as saturated as it could be is with the lifecycle of the collaboration,

specifically the revision phase. The interviews were conducted in what was defined as the mobilisation phase, therefore participants were forecasting forwards, talking about what they thought would happen, therefore the interview data in regards to the revision phase is not recounting participants experiences but the inferences they made. The model of collaborative development emerged from the combined data analysis of the two different datasets, interviews and documents. In hindsight, once the model of the lifecycle of the collaboration had been defined, it would have been beneficial to conduct further interviews to assess how well the account of the revision phase as it was visible in the minutes and what participants had projected to happen reflected to the reality. Unfortunately by this point of time the collaboration's HEFCE funded phase had finished and the funders of the PhD felt it would be inappropriate to approach people about further interviews.

Another option that was not considered at the time was conducting some shorter specific follow up interviews to explore further areas of interest that were highlighted by the document analysis or the interviews, such as exploring how well the information was cascaded. This method of conducting targeted interviews would have likened the approach of the study to a case study method. A case study was not something that I considered in the beginning of the study, however in retrospect it could have enabled me to build a much more comprehensive picture of what the experience of collaboration was like and explore the context of the collaboration further.

How applicable are the findings?

Generalisability in qualitative research has been a topic that has caused much discussion (see Generalisability in qualitative research p.47). The inferences made from qualitative findings are often moderate in comparison to quantitative findings yet offer insight and knowledge that could not necessarily be gained from quantitative research. With purposive sampling, selecting cases that illustrate the purpose (Silverman, 2000) and ensuring that the sample reflect the general characteristics of a wider group (Williams, 2002) it is possible to make theoretical inferences based on qualitative findings. In this study the aim of the sampling was to ensure that representatives from both the HE and the NHS organisations were involved. The participants were of varying levels of

seniority and experience. The findings of this study can be generalised to offer valuable insights to those setting up or being part of collaborations involving HE and NHS organisations or HE on its own. They would also be beneficial to other public sector organisations thinking of setting up a collaboration. The sample is not representative of NHS employees as a whole. The emphasis was on NHS employees involved in education, as the NHS employees involved in the collaboration were involved or had links with education, therefore the results should be reviewed with caution by anyone in a non-educational NHS collaborative setting yet there are wider themes that are applicable beyond an educational setting to situations where there are different groups of people working together towards a joint goal.

Some broad general findings from the study such as the balancing act may be applicable to any collaboration where participants need to juggle their involvement with other roles, however it is important to remember that each setting would have their own encouragers and inhibitors of involvement that would influence the balancing act and those expressed in this study apply to an educational setting. Furthermore the findings about the lifecycle of the collaboration offer insight into the stages of collaboration and when examined in the light of other studies on collaborative development they offer a compelling collective account of how collaborations develop and grow through similar stages across different settings. This study offers an account of the experience of involvement in a large scale collaboration that will be helpful to anyone involved in a collaboration but the findings may be most applicable to those in educational settings. Further work in this area may help to shed light on how generalisable these findings are to a wider audience in other collaborations involving public sector partners.

Reflections on the journey

On reflection many elements of the study would have lent themselves naturally to a case study however it was not a method I was familiar with and I did not even consider it as an option. I look back with regret at the opportunities that an ethnographic case study of the collaboration could have offered to the study but in the light of my previous skills and knowledge in research at the point of starting the PhD the course I chose was the logical option, if not in

hindsight the most appropriate. Undertaking this research has been a process with many unexpected turns. My beliefs have been confronted or liberated, depending how you view it, with different ways of doing the research and interpreting the data than I originally intended. At the start of this journey I would have described myself as having an open mind towards my research. As the journey has advanced, I have realised that I started this thesis from a very closed position but I have allowed my horizons to be broadened as the project has advanced. I started with a positivistic viewpoint and viewed qualitative methods just as a way of enriching the quantitative research process and adding more depth to it and not having much value of its own apart from feeding into the more superior way.

Even after I thought I had embraced the ontologies and epistemologies more aligned with qualitative methods, I was still trying to undertake my analysis with a realist and objective mind-set. I had an internal struggle moving from a point of expecting there to be one absolute truth to allowing myself to be interpretive and insert myself and my understandings into the process of analyses. I had hung onto an expectation that there would be one absolute truth that would emerge from my transcripts if I kept analysing them diligently enough. This only led me to frustration as nothing that I would describe as an absolute truth appeared to be emerging from my analysis. I felt like being checkmated by my data.

My supervisors encouraged me to explore more interpretive and naturalistic ways of qualitative analysis. If I had been given the advice at the start of the project I probably would have rejected as it would not have fitted into my idea of what research was. As I was reading around the philosophical underpinnings of research (for example, Crotty (1998)) things suddenly started to make sense. I was allowed to make interpretations. I was not supposed to suddenly find an absolute truth but to be part of the process of unearthing the meaning of what is being said by the participant. Also, adapting weak constructionism as a framework for the study is something I would have not planned to do when I designed the study originally. Reflecting back, I can see that it was an appropriate choice to make and suited the topic of the study well. It gave flexibility for making interpretations but it also encouraged me to look at them in the light of the social interactions taking place in the collaboration.

There is still a small part of me that finds the idea of constructionism, especially strong constructionism slightly challenging, as it is so far removed from my previous experience of research in a more positivist framework. I feel strongly that weak constructionism was the right framework to choose for this study and it enabled me to understand and interpret my data better. Part of me wishes that I had had this revelation of the value of interpretative and naturalistic ways of doing qualitative enquiry earlier. Yet, there is another part of me that is grateful for the journey I have had and for my supervisors allowing me to find my way to this point at my own pace.

An aspect that I only became aware of in the later stages was how easily I had started to use the language used by the participants without examining why I had done so. An example of this is how the participants often used the terms practice and theory interchangeably with the NHS and HE respectively. They used the terms in such a matter of fact way that I as a researcher adopted their language without thinking about the terms that were used as synonyms for each other and how relevant that was for the study. The SHA was one of the partner organisations and the use of the term practice could be seen to diminish the range and capacity of the partner organisations by limiting their sphere of influence to merely practice settings. With the use of term practice for NHS it almost assumes that practice is all that takes place in an NHS organisation thus excluding education and strategic planning that takes place. For the participants the use of the terms was unconscious and commonplace. This study did not aim to examine in depth, like in discourse analysis, what was meant with each word and phrase used. However one can but wonder if the habitual use of terms like practice and theory actually widen the gap between the NHS and HE by drawing attention to the differences rather than focusing on the unifying factor of education that both share.

The participants were assured of the confidentiality and the anonymity when they chose t take part. However in my inexperience I did not realise how challenging this would be in the light of the limited number of partner organisations and people involved. Once I started the data collection it was apparent to me that I would have to be very careful in selecting quotes that would not give away participants identity. One of the participants particularly asked that I would show them a list of quotes that I was going to use from their

interview before I put them in. Overall the assurance of confidentiality given to the participants was kept though carefully selecting quotes and removing information that could be used to identify an individual. In the course of the study I came to realise that confidentiality and anonymity is much more than naming your participants A, B and C.

In the earlier chapters, being part of the collaboration was likened to a journey. A similar analogy can also be used for my experience of undertaking a PhD. When I started, I felt I had clear idea of what I was going to do and how I was going to achieve it. Looking back, I have ended up in a place that I would never have expected but also in a way that I would never have expected. I feel that I should have allowed myself to 'start messy' rather than having too defined an idea of what I wanted to do. I have been challenged by the epistemological journey I have been on but I am also grateful for it as it has taught me to see the value in methods and methodologies that I did not previously appreciate. In the beginning of my PhD I would have agreed with the statement that once you have your research question, then you find the best method for answering it without being willing to commit to the fullness of that statement. I was happy to find the best method, as long as it was one that fitted my then positivist viewpoint. Now, towards the end of my PhD journey, I feel a sense of excitement about the statement and the opportunities it can open to explore new methods in order to ensure that the question at hand is answered in the best possible way.

Contributions of this study

As highlighted in the introduction and the literature review chapters the agenda for collaboration has been increasing in the public sector and in the HE over the last decade (see section Setting the scene p.2 and Changing climate – more collaboration nationally & internationally p.17). Financial pressures as well as political demands such as the Bologna declaration and need for greater interagency working are some of the contributing reasons for the rise of collaborative projects (European Commission, 1999, Roper et al., 2005, Defazio et al. 2009). Collaborations are seen as a way for the partnering organisations to do more through joining and sharing resources and knowledge than individual organisations could do alone (Keyton et al., 2008). More than decade

ago Short and Stein (2001) drew attention to the limited amount of research that has been conducted on collaborative work in HE setting. Therefore on a wider scale, this thesis responds to Short and Stein's (2001) call to increase the research base on collaboration in HE arena.

This thesis has offered an unique contribution beyond the general need for more research into collaborations in HE. The study addresses Lingard et al.'s (2004) call for more realistic accounts of what involvement in a collaborative project is like through the methods used in exploring the participants' experiences of collaboration and the findings of representing the involvement as a balancing act. Selsky and Parker (2005) highlighted the need for more focus on the social aspects of collaboration which this study has done through describing and defining the central role relationships had for the participants. Furthermore Thomson and Perry (2006) felt that more research was needed on the process of collaboration rather than focusing on the antecedent of good collaboration. This study has addressed this through the presentation of the evolving nature of the lifecycle of a collaboration. This thesis also acts as a good example of how weak social constructionism can be used successfully to study organisational behaviour in an applied setting. Social constructionism offered a way of exploring the collaboration as a relational function focusing on both the individuals and the larger entity they were part of through recognising the value of local knowledge within the context it was created in (Trickett and Espino, 2004).

Future research

Expanding on Hardy et al.'s (2005) model of the role of discourse in collaboration, a model of collaboration as a socially constructed entity that is a result of the combination of the social interaction and the context of the collaboration was proposed. The participants' experiences in the CETL were shaped by both the relationships in the collaboration and their individual context as created by the combination of their home organisation and their workgroup. There was a balancing act that the participants performed as part of judging their involvement. The context and the social interactions both play a role in this internal balancing act that the participants perform, yet from this research alone it is difficult to make inferences beyond the existence of them. A potential

direction for future research would be to explore this process of internal balancing and examine if there are differences in this process depending on the role the individual has in the collaboration.

The collaboration as a collective appeared to be an actor when examining the process of reciprocity individuals engaged in. Previous research, such as De Cremer and Van Lange (2001), has focused mainly on the dynamics of the actor relationships between individual people. The findings of this study suggest that exploring further the role of collaboration as an actor would be beneficial for future collaborative projects to enable them to create an atmosphere that would encourage reciprocity as well as discovering external factors that influence the participants' decisions to reciprocate. Another relational aspect of collaboration that could be further explored is how to enable the networks of connections participants themselves have made to be more widely available in their organisations. The participants struggled with the idea of exclusivity of the connections. The focus of research in future collaborative projects should include investigating how to create a networking portal investigating the potential to allow those not directly involved in a collaboration access to the connections that others in their organisation had made. This would also help to maximise the impact of the collaborative connections to benefit future partnerships as part of the evolutionary cycle of collaborations.

Recommendations for future collaborative projects

The focus of this study was not on evaluating the impact of CETL on the partner organisations or on the careers of the individual members. However from the findings of this study, it is possible to make some inferences on the influence CETL had for those involved and make recommendations for future collaborative projects. The recommendations are presented in Table 16 on the following page. Rather than being a comprehensive guide to organising an effective collaboration, the aim of the recommendations is to help different parties see what they may expect from the experience of being part of a collaboration and how to improve it. As collaborations are evolving entities, it is helpful for partners to appreciate the messiness that takes place during the formation phase of the collaboration. The collaboration as a whole needs to allow this to happen without being directive and for the individual partners to be

reminded that even if the unstructured nature of the collaboration is discomforting at the time, it can help to strengthen the collaboration in the long term. Another important aspect is to value the relationships and the connections that are formed.

	Recommendation
For collaborations as a whole	Allow the collaboration to go through a 'messy stage' and resist the urge to be directive. Allowing the collaboration to emerge gives it strength and grows sense of ownership participants have *Reference: Identity and focus p.154*
	If collaboration involves multiple levels or layers, look for ways which encourage ideas and information to flow across the collaboration *Reference: Complexity of CETL p. 105 and Communication p.131*
	Create opportunities for informal social interaction as the relationships are build up through these *Reference: People make it p.93 and Connecting up - Growing relationships p. 117*
For partner organisations	Make sure the participants know their 'limits' in representing the organisation, be clear about what they can commit to on behalf of the organisation and what not *Reference: Support from organisation for involvement p.100*
	Look for ways to make the collaboration more widely known to those not involved in it *Reference: Knowledge and understanding of CETL p.97*
	If collaboration has external funding, look for ways to exchange commodities with the other partners to build commitment beyond the external stimulus for the collaboration *Reference: Reality check p.165 and Lifecycle of a collaboration p.182.*
For individual partners	Be prepared for the early stages of the collaboration to appear messy and uncertain *Reference: Identity and focus p.154*
	Being part of collaboration is a tension between the challenges and benefits. Managing workload effectively will help to reduce some of the pressure *Reference: Pressure points in involvement p.87*
	Take time to forge relationships. The connections that are made during the collaboration will last beyond the timeframe of the collaboration and will open opportunities for future partnerships *Reference: Connecting up - Growing relationships p.117*

Table 16 List of recommendations for future collaborative partnerships

Summary

The experience of collaborative involvement was one of balance and tension. Participants enjoyed the experience of being part of the collaboration but at the same time found it challenging. The context in which the collaboration

took place and the relationships that the participant had formed both played an important part in the way participants perceived the collaboration. As the collaboration developed and grew, the participants became more settled in their role and felt more comfortable in their involvement. Being able to see benefits for their students, their organisation and themselves encouraged the participants to continue with the collaboration even when faced with possible barriers to their involvement. The collaboration had three main phases, formation, mobilisation and revision. There were no strict boundaries between the phases, rather there was considerable overlap between them. The collaboration as a whole was a growing and developing entity, which evolved as the relationships between the members developed. There is an on-going cycle of collaborations where the organisational equivalent of DNA from previous collaboration is carried forwards to another collaboration through the people who were involved in it. The participants themselves felt that CETL had created a platform for future collaborations and working in the area.

> *I think sometimes projects like this, the partnership and the long term trust and relationships that are built up almost set the scene for future work, future developments, future collaborative events; because they recognise that actually there is that work based trust, you do have contacts in different places who have got knowledge about x, y and z and there doesn't need to be those artificial barriers because we are working for different organisation and I think for me that's one of the real achievements of CETL*
>
> *[Interview 14, NHS L267-275]*

Appendices

Appendix A. Topic guide

HOW and WHY

- How and why did you become involved in the CETL?
- What has helped your participation?
- Have you seen changes in the CETL since you've been involved?

EXPECTATIONS

- To what extent things have worked out as you expected they would?
- What were your first impressions of the CETL?
- What do you hope to achieve through your work stream?
- What do you think your organisation want to achieve through CETL?
- How has the level of commitment reflected your expectations?
- How have you found CETL compared to other collaborations?
- Have you been able to influence the direction of which things are going within or outside your work stream as you thought you would?

COSTS and BENEFITS

- What benefits have you seen from being part of the CETL?
- What benefits have you received personally from your participation?
- What long term benefits you can see from the collaboration?
- What have been the biggest difficulties that you have faced because of being part of CETL?
- What is the reason that has kept you being part of the CETL?
- Has your participation changed since you first got involved in the CETL?
- What kind of problems has being involved in the CETL caused you?
- How have you found the support from your colleagues and employer?
- Can you see any lessons from CETL for future collaborations?

Appendix B. Letter of Invitation

(updated version)

Date

Dear XX,

Individual aspirations in a multi-organisational collaboration

I am writing you to invite you to take part in a research about individuals' experience of being involved in a large scale collaboration. This research is focusing on people who have been involved with the CETL4HealthNE.

I would like to interview you about your experiences of the CETL4HealthNE. The interview will last up to an hour and consist of questions about what inspired you to become part of the CETL.

This research aims to explore the experiences and process of being involved in collaboration. The study hopes to inform future collaborations through building a picture of collaborative involvement from the individuals' point of view. I am conducting this research as part of my PhD and it is funded by CETL4HealthNE.

Please find attached an information sheet giving more information about the study. If you would like to participate in this study or if you have any further questions about it, please don't hesitate to contact me either via email laura.lindsey@ncl.ac.uk.

Thank you for your interest on this project.

Kind regards,

Laura Lindsey
CETL PhD student
School of Medical Education Development
Newcastle University
16/17 Framlington Place
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE2 4AA
0191 2464559
laura.lindsey@ncl.ac.uk

Appendix C. Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Individual aspirations in a multi-organisational collaboration (updated version)

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being carried out and what it will involve. Please take your time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of the study?

CETL is an unusual collaboration between the NHS and the Higher Education partners. We are interested in what makes people motivated to take part in such collaboration. The aim of this study is to explore individuals' experiences of being involved in a collaboration in the framework of CETL; how they became involved, does the collaboration reflect the expectations they had at the beginning of the collaboration as well as seeing if the aspirations have changed over a period of time. The research is undertaken by Laura Lindsey as part of her PhD research.

Why have I been chosen?

The study is focusing on the CETL collaboration and people with varying levels of involvement within it. Because you have been part of the CETL and it's activities you have been chosen as a possible participant for the study.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. A decision to withdraw at any time, or decision not to take part, will not affect your participation in CETL in any way.

What will happen to me if I take part?

The research consists of a face-to-face interview. The interview will last up to an hour. The questions in the interview will be around how you became involved in CETL as well as your reflections on CETL. The interviews will be audio recorded with your permission for further analysis.

What do I have to do?

If you are interested to take part in the study please contact me via email (laura.lindsey@ncl.ac.uk) or phone 0191 2464559 for further information and to arrange a date for an interview.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

You will receive no direct benefit from taking part in this study. The information that is collected during this study will give us a better understanding of the reasons why individuals participate in collaborations.

Will the things I say be kept confidential?

All information which is collected during the course of research will be kept strictly confidential. Also any quotes that are used will be completely anonymous.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

It is intended that the results of the study will published. A summary of the results will be available for people who participated on the study.

Who has reviewed the study?

The study has received favourable ethical opinion from the Newcastle 2 Local Research Ethics Committee.

Contact for further information?

You can contact Laura Lindsey who will be carrying out the research either via email laura.lindsey@newcastle.ac.uk or phone 0191 246 4559. Alternatively you can contact Laura's PhD supervisor Dr Pauline Pearson via email p.h.pearson@ncl.ac.uk or phone 0191 222 6781.

The postal address for both is

School of Medical Education Development

16/17 Framlington Place

Newcastle University

NE2 4HH

Appendix D. Consent form

Consent form for persons participating in research projects

Name of Participant: _____

Project Title: Individual aspirations in a multi-organisational collaboration

Name of Investigator/s: Laura Lindsey
Names of Supervisors: Dr Pauline Pearson
Dr Gabrielle Greveson

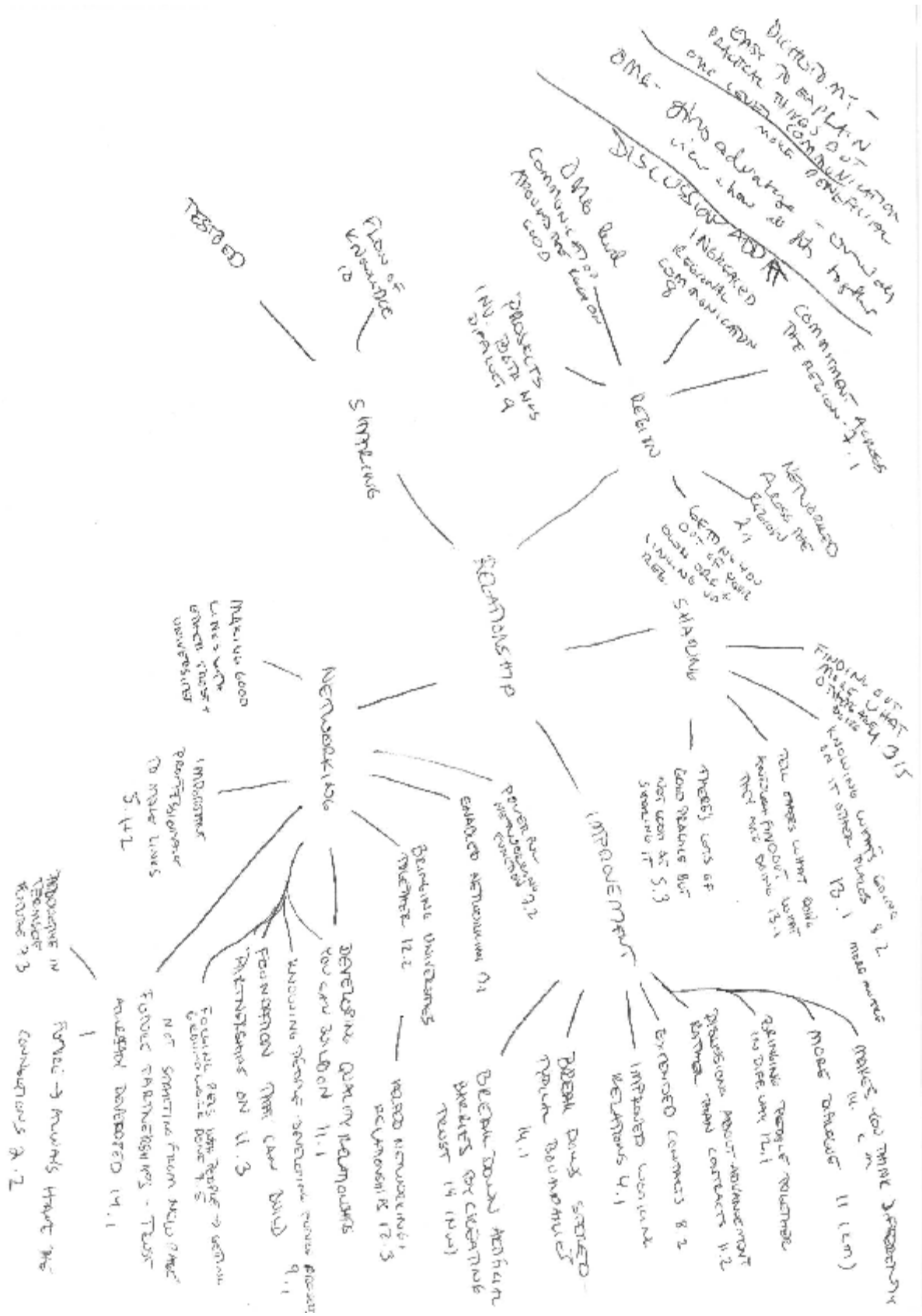
Please read through the following statements and tick to indicate your agreement.

1. I consent to participate in the above project, the particulars of which have been explained to me. [ ]
2. I give my permission to the interview being audio recorded for further analysis [ ]
3. I acknowledge that:
   (a) I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and to withdraw any data collected; [ ]
   (b) I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded, subject to any legal requirements. [ ]

Signature: _____ Date: _____
(Participant)

Signature: _____ Date: _____
(Researcher)

Appendix E. Data analysis mindmap



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